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ABOUT THE SERIES

The object of this series is to record, for the present and future generations, the story of the struggles and achievements of the eminent sons and daughters of India who have been mainly instrumental in our national renaissance and the attainment of independence. Except in a few cases, such authoritative biographies have not been available.

The biographies are planned as handy volumes written by knowledgeable people and giving a brief account, in simple words, of the life and activities of the eminent leaders and of their times. They are not intended either to be comprehensive studies or to replace the more elaborate biographies.

The work of writing these lives has to be entrusted to different people. It has, therefore, not been possible to publish the biographies in a chronological order. It is hoped, however, that within a short period all eminent national personalities will figure in this series.

Shri R. R. Diwakar is the General Editor of the series.

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I

Social Setting

According to Professor Ghurye the outstanding features of Hindu society are: (1) segmental division of society, (2) hierarchy, (3) restrictions on feeding and social intercourse; (4) civil and religious disabilities and privileges of the different sections, (5) lack of unrestricted choice of occupation, and (6) restrictions on marriage—'endogamy as the essence of the caste system.'[1]

The structural basis of Hindu society is caste. Caste is not merely a principle of social division, but a comprehensive system of life dealing with food, marriage, education, association and worship. Caste is defined as a hereditary, endogamous, usually localised group, having a traditional association with an occupation, and a particular position in the local hierarchy of castes. Relations between castes are governed, among other things, by the concept of pollution and purity, and generally commensality occurs within the caste.

According to Dr. M. N. Srinivas, the three main axes of power in the caste system are the ritual, the economic and the political ones and the possession of power in any one sphere usually leads to the acquisition of power in the other two.[2]

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[1] G. S. Ghurye, *Caste and Class in India*, chap. I.

[2] M. N. Srinivas, *Caste in Modern India and Other Essays*, p. 44.

The basic principles of caste can be summarised as under: (1) inequality of mankind based on birth, (2) inequality of professions, and (3) absolute and rigid social exclusion between the four main castes and the equally rigid sub-divisions between themselves. The whole system permeates the dogma of Brahmanic superiority. In short, "caste is social imperialism perfected by experience and maintained by religious sanction."* This system functioned best in a feudal, stationary economy with minimal, occupational and spatial mobility. It is completely accepted by all, and it is everywhere the unit of social action.

Untouchability is a corollary of the institution of caste, and not a separate institution. The untouchable formed lowest stratum of Hindu society. They were in that position for centuries together. The touch or shadow or even voice of an untouchable was deemed by caste Hindus as polluting. They were forbidden to keep animals and to use certain metals for ornaments, and had to live in the unhygienic outskirts of villages. Their condition was miserable. They were denied the use of public wells, and their children were not admitted to schools attended by caste Hindu children. All temples were closed to them. They could not get service even from barbers and washermen. They were treated by caste Hindus as sub-human. Public services, including police and military services, were closed to them. Naturally, they followed hereditary occupations and trades of a degrading order. The social segregation kept them untouchable throughout their life. They remained socially degenerated; economically impoverished; politically servants of the upper classes; and were permanently excluded from educational and cultural opportunities. They were born as untouchables; they lived and died as untouchables.

The Brahmins were regarded as the gods on earth. The exemption of property from royal claim, freedom from being kil-

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*K. M. Panikkar, *Caste and Democracy*, p. 18.

led and such others were the privileges of the Brahmins. The four orders of society as seen in the *Purushasukta* denoted not only the origin of the classes but also a divine justification of the order of society.[4] According to Ghurye, special rights for the higher classes and disabilities for the lower ones were almost a universal feature of a class society. The dominance of religion was manifest in every sphere. Social life lay for the most part outside the sphere of state activities.

In the Islamic medieval period, the Shudras and the untouchables were denied the "human" rights of education, equality and liberty. The Muslim rulers created sardars or noblemen from the caste Hindus, they did not confer these privileges on untouchables. The rulers thought that they would have to face opposition of the caste Hindus if they conferred privileges on the untouchables. In the Maratha empire also, though the untouchables, especially Mahars, fought heroically against the Mohammedans, they were deprived of these privileges. Even the great Shivaji could not abolish the system of untouchability.

Energetic attempts to free Hindu society from the evil system of untouchability were going on since the time of the Buddha (500 B.C.). The ideological and spiritual attempts to abolish untouchability and establish social equality went on for centuries. Chakradhar, Ramanand, Chaitanya, Kabir, Ekanath, and other saints succeeded to a great extent in establishing spiritual equality and the *bhakti* (devotion) cult.

The advent of Christianity, however, did not improve the lot of the untouchables. The socio-economic conditions of the untouchables remained stagnant and continued to be vitiated by casteism up to the last hours of the British regime. The Christian missionaries totally failed to eliminate the caste tyranny, economic exploitation and political slavery.

It was only during the British period that the untouchables became a problem of the Hindu social organization. The wes-

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[4]G. S. Ghurye, *op. cit.*, p. 182.

tern impact was not confined to politics narrowly defined. The social institution of caste came under attack as being incompatible with the idea of democracy. The western notion of representative institutions was based on adult franchise What democracy asserts is equality of rights, privileges and opportunities and not the equality in respect of talent or character.

The Indian social reform movement began with the introduction of new sects. The leaders of these new sects were influenced by ideas of liberty, a belief in the parliamentary system and the conviction that all men had equal rights before God and the law. Reformers had a vision of the new social structure based on social equality. Social reformers pointed out that the undemocratic institution of caste was not compatible with political democracy. According to Tagore so long as society remained unjust there could be no justice in politics. Social reformers wanted the higher and the lower castes to have equal rights in law, education, politics and in every other matter. Under British rule, the Brahmin as well as the Shudra had equal status in the law courts.

This meant that a social change was brought about. But in the new context what is meant by social change? "Social change may be defined as the process in which is discernible significant alteration in the structure and functioning of a particular social system".[5] According to Srinivas, social change is brought about by sanskritisation and westernisation. These are linked processes in modern India and it is not possible to understand one without reference to the other. Sanskritisation is both a part of the process of social mobility as well as the idiom in which mobility expresses itself. When there is sanskritisation mobility may be said to occur within the framework of caste, whereas westernisation implies mobility outside the framework of caste. Sanskritisation can also occur independently of the acquisition of political and economic power. According to

[5]B. Kuppuswamy, *Social Change in India.*

Srinivas, the introduction by the British of a western political institution like parliamentary democracy has also contributed to the increased sanskritisation of the country. But sanskritisation does not always result in higher status for the sanskritised caste; and this is clearly exemplified by the untouchables.[6]

According to Srinivas, when the leaders of the dominant castes are sensitive to economic and political opportunities they are socially conservative. They do not, for instance, like the condition of Harijans to improve. They have a vested interest in keeping Harijans poor and ignorant. At the present time the Harijans are their most important source of agricultural labour and if they become educated and conscious of their rights they will be a threat to the position of the dominant castes[7]. The leaders of the upper castes claim equality for themselves with the Brahmin or Vaishya, but so far as the Harijans are concerned, they seem determined to keep them where they are at the present moment.[8]

It was during British rule that India became a single political entity. The technological developments of the last 150 years or more made it possible to create an administrative communications network extending over the whole of India. British rule set in motion economic forces which upset the traditional hierarchy and increased economic mobility and led to increased social mobility. The increased economic benefits went to the castes which were already at the top of hierarchy. According to M. N. Srinivas, the policy pursued by the British government in India of giving preference to the low castes was in accord with humanitarian sentiments. It also had the effect of making the lower castes look up to the British for protection. It drove a wedge between the higher and the lower castes.[9] The British policy was to per-

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[6]M. N. Srinivas *op cit.*, p. 49, 58.

[7]*Ibid.*, p. 91.

[8]*Ibid*, p. 105.

[9]*Ibid*, p. 19.

petuate the regime of social medievalism in India because that would strengthen the foundations of their political rule.

The removal of untouchability and all disabilities from which the depressed classes suffered formed an important item in the programmes of all socio-religious movements that sprang up in India during British rule. The attitude of the rulers, though not antagonistic, was not favourable to the untouchables. The government was careful not to antagonise the upper classes. It always sidetracked the issue as far as possible. Besides, the upper stratum of government officers was composed of Brahmins.

The intellectual renaissance of India has been a great causal factor in the rise of modern Indian nationalism. The renaissance in India was characterised primarily by moral and spiritual aspirations. Revivalism was dominant in the renaissance movement. One of the greatest renascent forces was the Brahmo Samaj which was regarded as a synthesis of Hinduism and Christianity. Ram Mohan Roy (1772-1833), Devendra Nath Thakur (1817-1905) and Keshav Chandra Sen (1838-1884) were the leaders of the Brahmo Samaj movement 'which was based on a synthesis of stern monotheism, intellectual rationalism, the monism of the Upanishads and the religious devoutness of Christianity.[10] It tried to establish a brotherhood wherein man would not be divided from man because of caste. The Prarthana Samaj (Prayer Cult) was established in Bombay and it threw caste overboard. Swami Dayanand Saraswati established the Arya Samaj which tried to revive the ancient purity of the Vedic Society. It was opposed to the rigidity of caste distinctions based on birth. It championed social reform. The ideological influence of the Ramkrishna Mission's charitable work and the Theosophical Society must be mentioned in this context. All these movements rendered valuable service in their own way in reforming the behaviour patterns in Hindu society. The main problems that confronted the leaders, along with the political

[10]V. P. Varma, *Modern Indian Political Thought*, p. 6.

backwardness, were the caste system, untouchability, child marriage, widow marriage and emancipation of women. A bitter controversy arose whether social reforms should precede political reforms. The topmost men participated in that controversy Men like Ranade, Agarkar, Dr. Bhandarkar actively propagated the views of the social reformers. Tilak was on the side of political reformers.

The policy of the 'Occidental' school under Macaulay's leadership triumphed in the field of education. Western education created the foundations of a new type of intellectual and political life in India. Bhandarkar, M. G. Ranade, Chiploonkar, Tilak, Agarkar, Gokhale in Maharashtra; Tagore, Aurobindo, Vivekananda, J. C. Bose, P. C. Roy in Bengal; Vijayaraghavacharya, Pantulu, Rangiah Naidu, G. Subramania Iyer in Madras and Hansraj, Shraddhananda, Lala Lajpat Rai in the Punjab were some of the notable figures with western education who took leading part in the socio-religious movements of the country. In Maharashtra, Jyotiba Phooley carried on his movement for social equality. He founded the Satyashodhak Samaj (Society of the Seekers of Truth) in 1873. Phooley's was a revolt against caste, so far as caste denied ordinary human rights to all the members of Hindu society. He was the first man who inspired self-confidence in the masses.

The democratic awakening of the depressed classes and increasing consciousness of their basic rights was a part of the general national democratic awakening that had taken place among the Indian people during the British rule. The humanitarian activity of the members of the upper castes reinforcing the rebellious struggles of the submerged sections constituted the social reform movement in India. Removal of untouchability became one of the programmes of the nationalist movement. Leaders like Mahatma Gandhi declared in 1920 "untouchability cannot be given a secondary place in the programme. Without the removal of that taint, Swaraj is a meaningless term."

The introduction of railways and buses, modern industries

recruiting their labour from both touchables and untouchables, restaurants where all people met and the newly developed class-consciousness supplanting caste-consciousness, were some of the factors that helped to liquidate caste-inequalities and caste-distinctions. The spread of education accelerated this process. It brought forth a group of intellectuals and passionate fighters for their elementary human rights and political demands.

The Depressed Classes Mission Society of India was formed under the chairmanship of Justice Sir N. G. Chandavarkar on October 18, 1906. On November 11, 1917, a Conference of the depressed classes was convened under the chairmanship of Sir Chandavarkar. The Conference placed the demands of the untouchables before government. In 1917, a resolution incorporating these demands was passed at the Calcutta session of the Congress. Social workers before 1920 were under the influence of humanitarian ideas. V. R. Shinde and Shivram Kamble did pioneering work in promoting the movement for the abolition of untouchability. Maharaja Sayajirao of Baroda and Shahu Chhatrapati of Kolhapur helped the movement from its inception.

II

Birth and Early Life

AMONG THE UNTOUCHABLE communities in the fold of Hindu society, the Mahars are a robust, adaptable, intelligent, fighting, brave and leading community. It is held by some that the Mahars were original inhabitants of Maharashtra. Maharashtra was the *Mahar-Rashtra* ! The Mahars were the first to come into contact with the Europeans in India. They formed part of the army. But the recruitment of Mahars in the army was discontinued after 1892. Ramji, father of Ambedkar, protested against this unjust order and approached M. G. Ranade and interviewed the Governor of Bombay. The order banning the untouchables in the army was withdrawn on February 6, 1917 and a Mahar Battalion (111) was raised in the First World War (1914-1918).

There were three schools of *bhakti* (devotion) prevalent amongst untouchables, especially the Mahars. They were Kabir, Ramanand and Nath. In 1896, Ramji Ambedkar became the follower of Kabir. This *bhakti* school of thought found consolation in compassion, benevolence and resignation to God. Kabir condemned the caste system, and hence the untouchables, who suffered untold miseries on account of the caste system, turned to the Kabir Cult.

Maloji Sakpal, Ambedkar's grandfather, came of a good Mahar family from Ratnagiri district. He was a retired military

man. Ramji also a retired military man had 14 children. The last child Bhimrao was born at Mhow in Central India on April 14, 1891. Ramji rose to the rank of a Subedar-Major and was a head instructor in a military school for about 14 years. After retirement in 1891 on a pension of Rs. 50 per month he settled in Dapoli in Ratnagiri district. In 1894 he was re-employed as a store-keeper in the Public Works Department, Ratnagiri, and was later transferred to Satara.

Bhimrao entered the Government High School, Satara, in 1900, in the first standard. His name in the school was Bhiva Ramji Ambavadekar. Original surname of his family was Sankpal. But his ancestors preferred to call themselves after their ancestral village Ambavade which is in Khed taluka in Ratnagiri district. One teacher named Ambedkar in the Satara High School loved Bhimrao very much and often fed him. He was obliging and kind. As a mark of love and respect to this teacher Bhimrao began to call himself Ambedkar and, throughout his life, remained grateful to this teacher who treated him so kindly during his school days. When Ambedkar went to the Round Table Conference, this teacher had sent him a congratulatory letter.

During his school days Ambedkar realised what the stigma of untouchability meant. One cartman refused to associate with him and his brother in a bullock-cart. Ambedkar and his brother were going to Goregaon from Masur railway station. They secured a bullock cart. Hardly had the cart gone a few yards when the cartman knew that the two boys in the cart were untouchables ? The boys paid the cartman double the fare. Bhim's elder brother drove the cart and the cartman followed the cart on foot for fear of pollution. They could not get drinking water for the whole journey. He knew that he belonged to the family that was untouchable ! Another bitter experience was that no barber would cut his hair, because of pollution; and Bhim's sisters cut their brother's hair. All such insulting ill-treatment was universally experienced by all untouch-

ables. This humiliating and inhuman treatment at the hands of his co-religionists in his school days must have resulted in his burning hatred for caste Hindus and Hinduism.

Being an untouchable by birth Ambedkar was forced to sit apart in the school. He could not mix with other boys or play cricket and other games with them. The teachers would not touch his note-books. Some of them would not even ask the untouchables to recite poems or put questions to them for fear of being polluted. When they felt thirsty in the school they turned their mouths upward and then some body would kindly pour drinking water into their mouths, as if through a funnel! The untouchables were prohibited from learning Sanskrit. The Sanskrit teacher was adamant and did not teach Sanskrit to the untouchables. Ambedkar was forced to take Persian as the second language in the high school.

Ramji shifted to Bombay as his job in Satara was terminated in 1904. Ambedkar joined the Elphinstone High School, a government institute. Being a Mahar, he could not play cricket at Satara, but in Bombay there was no such restriction and he could play games, as much as he wanted. The caste Hindu children used to keep their tiffin-boxes behind the blackboard. Once he was asked to write on the blackboard. The boys feared that their food would be polluted by Ambedkar's presence near the board. They ran to the blackboard and hurled their tiffin boxes aside before Ambedkar could reach and touch the blackboard. The teachers discouraged him.

Ambedkar passed his Matriculation Examination in 1907. This was indeed an event to be celebrated in his family. The boy from an untouchable Mahar family passing the Matriculation Examination was the object of admiration. A congratulatory meeting was arranged under the presidentship of S. K. Bole, one of the leaders of the Satyashodhak movement. K. A. Keluskar, who later wrote an exhaustive biography of the great Shivaji, took a fancy to Ambedkar and presented him with a copy of the life of Gautam Buddha.

A notable incident in his school life was his marriage. He was in the fifth standard and only 14, when he was married to Ramabai, a sober good girl who was then only nine.

III

Education

THE MAHARAJA SAYAJIRAO of Baroda, a progressive ruler, had announced that help be given to any promising untouchable student for higher studies. Ambedkar welcomed the opportunity and joined Elphinstone College. He was granted a scholarship of rupees twenty-five per month.

Professor Muller lent him books and gave him clothes. But the insulting environment and pitiable sight were not changed. The college hotel-keeper who was a Brahmin, would not give him tea or water. Ambedkar did not mind such inconveniences, and humiliating treatment. He concentrated his energies on study and passed his B.A. Examination in 1912 with English and Persian as his subjects. Though he subsequently made his mark as a scholar, he could not secure any class in the college examinations.

After his graduation Ambedkar joined the Baroda State Service. His father disapproved of his decision. The higher officer's in Baroda State were manned by orthodox upper class Hindus. The ideas of pollution by touch were so strong that even the peons in his office used to throw office files at him lest they should be polluted. He could not get residential accommodation in a decent locality. He was staying with Pandit Atma Ram, an Arya Samajist. The social conditions were unfavourable and unbearable for him to continue in service. He,

therefore, decided to resign his post at the earliest opportunity.

The death of his father on February 2, 1913 was a shock to him. His father, Ramji, had sacrificed much to provide education to his son and had to incur debts. He was unfortunate that he did not live to see his son going abroad to take to higher education.

A new opportunity came to Ambedkar. The Maharaja of Baroda thought of sending some students to the U.S.A. for higher studies at the Columbia University. The Maharaja decided to send Ambedkar to Columbia University. On June 4, 1913, he signed an agreement with the Baroda State authorities and in the third week of July, 1913, he joined Columbia University as a Gaekwad Scholar. He was the first Mahar to study in a foreign university. This was an unique opportunity for an Indian and especially for an untouchable. It was an ennobling influence.

Ambedkar joined a cosmopolitan club where some of the Indian students lived. He could move freely. He could continue his daily routine with a status of equality. He found it a new world. It helped to enlarge his mental vision.

Professor Seligman, the well-known economist, was his teacher. In June 1915, he obtained the M.A. degree for his thesis, 'Ancient Indian Commerce'. In May 1916, he read a paper on 'The Castes in India, Their Mechanism, Genesis and Development', at the Anthropology Seminar sponsored by Dr. Goldenweiser. It was published in the *Indian Antiquary* in May 1917. It was also published in the form of a brochure, the first published work of Ambedkar. Therein he observed that endogamy is the essence of castes. According to him, a caste is an enclosed class and it existed before Manu whom he described as an audacious person, a dare-devil. According to him, Manu simply codified the existing caste rules.

Lala Lajpat Rai, the great nationalist leader, was then an exile in America. He used to go daily to the College library where Ambedkar used to study. Lalaji enquired about this

Indian student. He found that this Indian student was a Mahar —an untouchable. Lalaji was as radical in social reforms as he was radical in politics. He discussed on the national struggle for independence which was going on in India.

In June 1916, Ambedkar submitted his thesis for the degree of Ph D. entitled 'National Dividend for India : A Historic and Analytical Study.' It was published eight years afterwards under the title : 'The Evolution of Provincial Finance in British India.' The original doctoral dissertation was revised in the light of the Montagu-Chelmsford Reforms with reference to finance. The book was dedicated to Maharaja Sayajirao and it had an introduction by Professor S. A. Seligman. Professor Seligman stated therein, "Nowhere to my knowledge, has such a detailed study of the underlying principles made." In the thesis Ambedkar stated that the whole policy was dictated by the interests of British industries and manufacturers. He concluded that in every country there is social oppression and social injustice. This does not mean that the country should be without political power. This book was so indispensable that during the budget session, Indian Legislators used this as a reference book, and to students it was a guide. When he was called to give evidence before the Hilton-Young Commission on Indian Currency, he saw with pride that every member of the Commission had this book for reference.

Ambedkar left Columbia University to join the London School of Economics and Political Science as a graduate student in June 1916. Professor Seligman gave him introductory letters to Professor Cannan and Sydney Webb. In October 1916 he was admitted to Gray's Inn for law. But he had to face a crisis. He returned to India after spending a year in London working on a thesis for the M.Sc. (Econ.) degree. The return before completion of the work was necessitated by the termination of the scholarship granted to him by Maharaja Sayajirao of Baroda. Ambedkar tried to persuade him to reconsider his decision but without success. He obtained permission of the London University through the recommendation of Professor

Cannan to resume his studies within a period not exceeding four years from October, 1917.

In July 1917, Ambedkar was made Military Secretary to the Maharaja of Baroda with a view to being groomed for the post of the State's Finance Minister. Nobody received him in the State. In no hotel or hostel could he get accommodation. He took shelter in a Parsee Hotel and stayed there incognito. He received the same treatment in his office. Peons flung office files on his table. Drinking water was not available to him in office. All this was unbearable to him. He sent a note to the Maharaja; but the Dewan expressed his inability to do anything in the matter. Even a learned untouchable could not soften the prejudices of the caste Hindus. This mortifying treatment at the hands of caste Hindus compelled him to leave Baroda. A professor in Baroda offered to accept him as a paying guest, but later he withdrew his offer. He left Baroda and came to Bombay in November 1917. At this time he published a brochure: '*Small Holdings in India and their Remedies.*'

The Depressed Classes held two Conferences in November in Bombay. In a resolution at one Conference an appeal was made to government to protect the interests of untouchables by granting the Depressed Classes the right to elect their own representatives to the legislatures in proportion to their population. By another resolution the Conference supported the Congress—League Scheme with a view to impressing upon the caste Hindus the necessity of removing all disabilities imposed upon the Depressed Classes in the name of custom and religion. The other Conference opposed the transfer of power to the caste Hindus, and appealed to government to grant them the right to choose their own representatives. According to Ambedkar, the Congress-League Scheme was unsound as the Executive and Legislatures in it derived their mandates from and were responsible to different powers.[1]

[1]B. R. Ambedkar, *The Evolution of Provincial Finance, in British India*, p. 207.

The first All-India Depressed Classes Conference, presided over by Maharaja Sayajirao of Baroda on March 23 and 24, 1918 was held in Bombay and was attended by prominent leaders. It was aimed at appealing to the conscience of the country for removing the blot of untouchability. Tilak said that he would not recognise God if he were to tolerate untouchability. But Ambedkar was very sceptical about the movement started by caste Hindus for the uplift of untouchables.

In Bombay Ambedkar tried to mould his life anew. Through the good offices of a Parsee gentleman, he became a tutor to two students. He started a business firm offering advice to dealers in stocks and shares. But he closed it permanently as the customers were not ready to go to an untouchable for advice. In November, 1918, he joined as Professor of Political Economy in Sydenham College, Bombay. Students from other colleges attended his lectures. But the social treatment remained unchanged. "The high-caste professors objected to his drinking water from the pot reserved for the professorial staff."[2] He served in the college from November 11, 1918 to March 11, 1920 and resigned his post to resume his studies in law and economics in London. The Maharaja of Kolhapur Shahu Chhatrapati also helped him in this respect.

At this time some notable incidents took place. The Southborough Commission examined representatives of different interests and communities. The recommendations of this Commission were the basis of the Montford Reforms. The Report of the Commission was submitted on February 22, 1919. Ambedkar and V. R. Shinde were called upon to give evidence before the Commission for Franchise. Ambedkar demanded separate electorates and reserved seats for the Depressed Classes in proportion to their population. He emphasised social equality before the demand of Home Rule. He remarked that Home Rule was as much the birthright of a Mahar as that of a Brahmin.

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[2]Keer, *Mahatma Jyotirao, Phooley-Father of Social Revolution*, Bombay 1965, p. 39.

He stressed the need for a marked change in the attitude of caste Hindus. The non-Brahmin leaders put forward their claims for separate electorates; but they were turned down.

On January 31, 1920, Ambedkar started a weekly paper *Mooknayak* (Leader of the Dumb) to champion the cause of the Depressed Classes in India. In the editorial of the first number he remarked that the existing newspapers were looking to the interest of certain castes. He said, "Devoid of power and knowledge, the non-Brahmins and the Depressed Classes cannot make any progress."[3]

The different conferences of Depressed Classes became vocal about their grievances. The conferences of the Depressed Classes held at Nagpur (1918) and Kolhapur (March 21, 1920) under the presidentship of Shahu Maharaja were attended by Ambedkar. At the latter conference Shahu Maharaja said Ambedkar had the potential for becoming an all-India leader. The conference ended with an intercaste dinner. At the Nagpur Conference held in May, 1920 Ambedkar criticised V. R. Shinde and his Depressed Classes Mission started with the support of Sir Narayan Chandavarkar. The Servants of India Society sympathised with this cause. This Conference passed resolutions of no confidence against V. R. Shinde and others. Ambedkar was very firm about his postulates. He declared : "Institutions and individuals have no right to defend the interests of Depressed Classes, if they are not run by untouchables". This Nagpur Conference laid the foundation of Ambedkar's future work. In the articles which he wrote for his weekly paper he emphasised that the Depressed Classes were justified in their opposition to the rule of the Brahmins in case transfer of power took place. He feared that if the protection of the British was withdrawn the caste Hindus would trample upon them. He stated that the Swaraj Constitution must include fundamental rights for the Depressed Classes.

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[3]Khairmoday, *Life of Ambedkar* (Marathi), Vol. II, p. 263.

Dr. S. V. Ketkar, the Marathi lexicographer, requested Ambedkar to join him as a contributor to the Marathi *Jnanakosha* (encyclopaedia). He refused the invitation. He also refused the invitation from the Principal of Sydenham College, Bombay, to read a paper at the Economic Conference held in December, 1918. These events throw light on his attitude towards the ameliorative movements started by the caste Hindus.

In September, 1920, Ambedkar rejoined the London School of Economics and Political Science and also entered Gray's Inn to qualify as a barrister. He accepted some financial help from Shahu Maharaja.

In London he started his studies afresh. He joined several libraries, e.g. the London University General Library, Goldsmith's Library of Economic Literature, the British Museum Library and the India Office Library. In those libraries he used to sit throughout the day even without a break for lunch, because he could not afford lunch. He resolutely avoided all kinds of diversions, such as excursions, theatres and restaurants. He asked his wife, Ramabai, to sell even ornaments if she found herself in difficulties. Many admirers voluntarily offered some help to Ramabai, but she refused to accept it.

In June, 1921, the University of London acepted his thesis. 'Provincial De-centralization of Imperial Finance in British India' for the M.Sc. (Econ.) degree. In 1922-23 he spent some months at the University of Bonn in Germany to read economics. In March, 1923, he submitted his thesis : 'The Problem of the Rupee—Its Origin and its Solution' for the degree of D.Sc. (Econ.). The thesis was published in December, 1923, by P. S. King and Company, London. The book had an introduction by Professor Cannan. He paid glowing tributes to Ambedkar for the stimulating freshness of his views. This book was re-issued by Thacker and Company, Bombay, in May 1947 under the title 'History of Indian Currency and Banking' [Volume I]. Ambedkar was called to the Bar in April 1923.

In London he met E. S. Montagu, Secretary of State for

India and Vithalbhai Patel, and had talks with them in respect of the grievances of the untouchables in India.

Three Preceptors

Ambedkar regarded three great men as his preceptors. The first was Kabir, the second was Jyotiba Phooley and the third was the Buddha. Kabir took him to the Bhakti (devotion) cult; Phooley inspired him to strive for anti-Brahminism and amelioration of the masses, their education and economic uplift; and the Buddha gave him mental and metaphysical satisfaction and showed the way leading to the emancipation of the untouchables, by resorting to the path of mass conversion.

Phooley was a social reformer of the 19th century in Maharashtra. He was the first man in Poona who openly made arrangements for water for the untouchables in Poona, and opened schools for women in 1848 and for untouchables in 1851. Shri Shahu Maharaj of Kolhapur called Phooley the "Martin Luther of Maharashtra." He opposed Brahminism, but he was not a hater of Brahmins. Men like Justice M.G. Ranade helped him in the cause of social reform. He founded in September, 1873 the Satyashodhak Samaj (Society of the Seekers of Truth). It preached three principles :

(a) God Almighty is one. All being are His children,
(b) There is no need for any middleman between man and God, and
(c) Greatness should not depend on the conditions of birth i.e. in what caste a men is born.

Shri Sayajirao Gaekwad of Baroda gave assistance to his cause and called him the "Booker T. Washington" of India. When Tilak and Agarkar were released from Dongari Jail in 1881, Phooley received them courageously and led them into Poona City in procession.

Erudition

Ambedkar was a voracious reader. Not only that he had

a powerful thirst for books. He bought books even sacrificing his daily needs. In New York he purchased about 2,000 old books. At the time of the Second Round Table Conference he bought books in London and sent them to India in 32 boxes. It is significant that he built a bungalow in Bombay and named it 'Rajgriha' (Buddha's palace). He stayed, took his meals and even slept in that library. His library contained up-to-date books on various topics, such as law, philosophy, religion, socialism, economics, politics, constitutional law and parliamentary affairs. There was one special division of political biographies.[4]

In India there were private libraries of many distinguished personalities. Shripad Babaji Thakur (first Maharashtriya Member of the Indian Civil Service), V. N. Mandlik of Bombay, Dr. Bhandarkar's eldest son, Justice K. T. Telang, M. R. Jayakar and Pandit Jawaharlal Nehru were some prominent men in this category. Ambedkar's name can be included in this illustrious list.[5] He used to say, 'For a man like me who is socially boycotted these books took me to their hearts.'[6] He described his love of books as the love of a lover for his beloved. Pandit Madan Mohan Malaviya expressed his desire to purchase his collections for the Banaras Hindu University for two lakh rupees but he refused.[7] He was really an erudite person. He distinguished himself in many subjects—history, economics, politics, law and constitution. In these subjects he acquired the highest degrees of three world—famous English and American universities.

Influences of Living

While in America, he was impressed by two important things. The fourteenth amendment to the Constitution of the U.S.A. gave freedom to the Negroes. In India, the untouchables had

[4]*Navyug,* special number.
[5]*Janata,* special number.
[6]*Jayanti,* special number.
[7]*Mahanirvan,* special number.

no freedom. Secondly, he was impressed by the life of Booker T. Washington who died in 1915. The latter was a great social reformer and educator of the Negro race in America. Booker T. Washington, the Founder and President of the Tuskegee Institute, which disseminated education among the Negroes and broke the shackles of bondage which crushed the Negroes for centuries.

The parliamentary democracy of England was copied by many countries. Indian leaders who were fighting for the liberation of the country had before their minds the dreams of parliamentary government in India. Ambedkar realised that the impact of the West influenced Indian social and political life. He visualised that this western system alone would break the shackles of untouchables in India. He preached, by his own example, that 'worth' and not 'birth' shapes the life of an individual in any country. Before he entered Indian politics he was fully equipped with the western thoughts of democracy, equality, liberty and fraternity. His study in England and America fully revealed to him that the Hindu social system would never free the untouchables from social and political oppression. It became clear to him that not the laws of Manu but the constitutional safeguards would ultimately lead untouchables to a free life.

IV

Social Struggles

AMBEDKAR WAS EQUIPPED with the teachings of Phooley. He put before him the ideal of a society which was based on the principles of liberty, equality, and fraternity. His education in England and U.S.A. and the broad social outlook showed him the way to free his community from the social slavery of the caste Hindus. He had to fight Brahminism and for that he had to wage social battles against caste Hindus.

Ambedkar always made efforts to maintain a balance between thought and action. His principles of dynamism recognised that 'there is nothing fixed, nothing eternal, nothing *sanatan* : that everything is changing, that change is the law of life for individuals as well as for society[1]'. He held that social environment was as much responsible for human sorrow as man himself was. His ideal was to establish a society based on liberty, equality and fraternity. 'In an ideal society, there should be many interests consciously communicated and shared. There should be social endosmosis'.[2] For this he emphasised a social conscience which he regarded as the only safeguard of all right, fundamental or non-fundamental.[3] To him, social progress and social stability depended on 'fluidity' and 'equity' among the

[1]Ambedkar, *Annihilation of Caste,* p. 78.
[2]*Ibid,* Appendix p. 38.
[3]*Ambedkar, Ranade, Gandhi and Jinnah,* p. 35.

classes According to him, stability is wanted but not at the cost of change when change is imperative. Adjustment is wanted but not at the sacrifice of social justice.[4] Social stability meant to him negation of the caste system in Indian society.

The social struggles launched by Ambedkar were aimed at counteracting the unequal treatment meted out to the untouchables by the caste Hindus. His motive was to establish equal status in religious, social, economic and political matters to all classes, offering them an opportunity to rise in the scale of life and creating conditions for their advancement. These fundamental concepts were behind every social struggle that the untouchables under the leadership of Ambedkar launched against communal tyranny.

Mahad Tank Satyagraha

S. K. Bole, leader of the non-Brahmin Party, had moved a resolution in Bombay Legislative Council which read as follows :—"The Council recommends that the untouchable classes be allowed to use all public water-places, wells, and dharmashalas which are built and maintained out of public funds or are administered by bodies appointed by Government or created by statute, as well as public schools, courts and offices and dispensaries". The Bombay Government directive of September 11, 1923, was issued to give effect to the above Resolution. In spite of the Bole Resolution a good number of Local Boards and Municipalities did not grant civil rights to the Depressed Classes.

Bole moved another Resolution on August 5, 1926. It was directed towards not giving grants to those Municipalities and Local Boards which refused to give effect to the Resolution on the subject passed by the Council three years earlier. To implement the Bole Resolution the Mahad Municipal Borough threw the tank (which was famous for its tasty water and hence known as *chowdar*) open to all communities. The caste Hindus in Mahad were hostile on this score.

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[4]Ambedkar, *op cit.*, p. 21.

At Mahad, a conference of untouchables on March 19 and 20, 1927 was attended by about 10,000 delegates. In his presidential address, Ambedkar stressed the necessity of rooting out ideas of highness or lowness and inculcating self-elevation through self-help, self-respect and self-knowledge. He asked his followers to enter Government service and to abandon their *watans* and acquire forest lands for agricultural pursuits. A resolution was passed at that conference and an appeal was made to caste Hindus and the Government to make the Bole Resolution a reality. This resolution was also supported by two caste Hindus. After the Conference, all the 10,000 delegates marched in a procession to the *chowdar* tank to assert their right to drink and take water.

There was a rumour that all the untouchables entered the Vireshwar temple. The caste Hindus came into the pandal of the Conference and attacked the delegates. Stray individuals were beaten. They had to run into Muslim houses for shelter. Ambedkar was forced to take shelter in a police station.

Thus ended a first public attempt to assert civic rights. The untouchables were compelled to face social boycott. They were dislodged from the land, and were assaulted in many villages. Ambedkar urged his followers to take aggressive steps and to wrest the right of drinking water at public water-courses and to force their entry into public temples. He thought of starting a *satyagraha* for vindication of his people's rights. Javalkar and Jedhe, two prominent leaders of the Satyashodhak movement in Maharashtra, promised their whole-hearted support to the proposed struggle on condition that all the Brahmins should be weeded out from it and that the struggle should be non-violent on a mass scale. Ambedkar, however, declared that it was erroneous to treat all Brahmins as enemies of untouchables.[5]

At Mahad, a *Satyagraha* Conference was called on December 25, 1927. The site for the Conference was taken from a Muslim

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[5]Keer *op cit.*, p. 85.

citizen. The local merchants non-cooperated fully. The Reception Committee had to purchase corn and other materials from outside. Ambedkar left Bombay with 200 delegates. About 3,000 *satyagrahis* were ready; but the District Magistrate requested Ambedkar to postpone the proposed struggle.

In his speech Ambedkar attacked the *varna* system as being at the root of inequality. He said that equality meant equal opportunity and making power dependent on inherent qualities.* He emphasised that Hindu society should be organised on two principles : equality and absence of casteism.

Among other resolutions, a resolution was passed to burn the *Manusmriti*, which, according to Ambedkar, perpetuated the social, economic, religious and political slavery of the untouchables. The *Manusmriti* was burnt on December 25, 1927. Bhaskar Rao Jadhav, a prominent non-Brahmin leader and a strong advocate against Brahminism, remarked that the sacred Hindu scriptures contained more good than evil. By another resolution it was demanded that the present priestly profession should be democratised, allowing everyone who desired to have an opportunity to become a priest. The resolution on the proposed *satyagraha* was moved by Ambedkar himself. He maintained that in the present circumstances the Government should not be antagonised and put on the side of the opposition.

Temple Entry Movements

Satyagraha for entering into the Kala Ram Mandir temple at Nasik was started in May, 1930. Ambedkar thought such a *satyagraha* might facilitate entry into other temples and create a change in the minds of Hindus. This peaceful *satyagraha* was directly under the leadership of Ambedkar. Bhaurao Gaekwad was the Secretary of the *satyagraha* Committee. About 15,000 men volunteers and 500 female volunteers were ready. A mile-long procession was taken towards the Kala Ram Mandir

**Mahad Magazine*, p. 186.

in batches of four. Since the doors of the temple were closed the processionists proceeded to Ghats of the Godavari river. The caste Hindus pelted the meetings with stones and shoes. After one month's struggle a compromise between the caste Hindus and the untouchables was reached. It was settled that strong man from the untouchables and caste Hindus should draw the chariot of Ram on His birthday (Ram Navami) ceremony. This promise was broken by the caste Hindus. They drew the chariot without the help of the untouchables. The temple of Ram was closed for the whole year. The agitation continued right up to the end of October, 1935. The news of the arrest of volunteers appeared in *The Times*, London. It added to the influence of Ambedkar at the Round Table Conference.

The Mahad Tank *Satyagraha,* the burning of *Manusmriti*, and the Kala Ram Mandir *Satyagraha* for temple entry were some of the movements launched by Ambedkar. He made clear the motives behind these social struggles. He said, 'It is not that you can solve all your problems by *satyagraha*. This is only a request to the upper-class Hindu mind . . [7]. This *satyagraha* is to change the hearts of the Hindus.' He was of opinion that the problems of the untouchables would never be solved by worship alone.[8] He laid stress on a change in the attitude of caste Hindus.[9]

Dr. Subbarayan, a leader from the South, introduced a Bill in the Central Assembly. It said that if a referendum favoured temple entry, temples should be thrown open to the untouchables, but the Bill said nothing of their right to worship the deity in the temples. Ambedkar flatly condemned the Bill as it did not condemn untouchability as a sin. In spite of Gandhiji's request, he refused to give full support to this Bill and the Temple Entry

[7]Kharat, *Muktisangram*, p. 25.

[8]*Ibid*, p. 25.

[9]*Navayug*, p. 33, special number.

Bill of Ranga Iyer. He regarded removal of untouchability more important than erection of temples.

Mahar Watan

According to the Hereditary Offices Act, the Mahars, holders of certain posts, were required to work all day and night, and in the absence of a Mahar servant, his father or any other member of his family was required to work in the service of the government. For this hard work they got a piece of land as *watan,* some corn from the villagers and some negligible remuneration varying from annas two to a rupee and a half per mensem. The result of the *watan* system was that the Mahars lost self-respect, and they were tied down to these trifling jobs. The practice kept down the Mahar community. Ambedkar emphasised that it was no use to amend the Act. On the contrary the *watan* system must be abolished. He impressed upon the minds of his community that instead of living on small crumbs, his community should bring the waste land under cultivation and maintain itself.

On March 19, 1928, Ambedkar introduced a Bill in the Bombay Legislative Council to amend the Bombay Hereditary Offices Act, 1874. At several meetings and Conferences he made clear the objects of this Bill. The first purpose of the Bill was to permit commutation of the *watan* at the option of the holder; the second, to provide better security for the payment of remuneration of certain classes of *watandars,* and the third purpose was to provide for specification, by rules, of the duties to be performed by *watandars.* While moving the Bill in the Bombay Legislative Council on August 3, 1928, he brought to the notice of the House that the lands were given to the Mahars by the ancient emperors of the country. The present government had neither increased the extent of the land nor paid any attention to the remuneration of these people and the income they would get was not even worth consideration. He proposed that *watan* lands should be given to the holders of those posts at

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[7]Kharat, *Muktisangram*, p. 25.

[8]*Ibid*, p. 25.

[9]*Navayug*, p. 33, special number.

The Mahar leaders organised a Conference at Haregaon (Ahmednagar District) on December 16, 1939 and a statement was submitted to the Governor of Bombay. The Government of Bombay conferred with Ambedkar. The demands of the Mahars put forth were as follows : To transform the *watan* lands of Mahars into *ryotwari* (peasant proprietorship) lands, to pay monthly wages to the Mahars treating them as inferior servants and to make them do only the government jobs.

Ambedkar again introduced a Bill at the Poona Session of the Bombay Legislative Council on September 17, 1937 Its aim was to abolish Mahar *watan*. He wanted to solve the problem of Mahar *watans* by all legitimate and constitutional means. In a letter to Bhaurao Gaekwad he stated that he did not want the agitation against the *watan* system to turn into a *satyagraha*. It was suggested on behalf of the Government that in the war emergency, such a struggle by the Mahars was not desirable. When Ambedkar became a Member of the Viceroy's Executive Council (1942), he promised to withdraw the movement for he thought that he might be able to serve the cause of his community better as a Member of the Viceroy's Executive Council than to conduct such a struggle. It was then promised on behalf of the Government that no increase in *Judi* would be effected. To agitate against the *watan* system, Ambedkar established 'the Bombay State Inferior Village *Watandar* Association' on June 16, 1956. He became its Chairman. In a statement he made it clear that if Government did not solve the problem amicably then he might prosecute the Government. The villagers opposed such a measure by all means at their command. Ambedkar remarked that Government accepted the principle 'land to the tiller', but was not ready to include Government lands under the jurisdiction of the Act.[11] He believed that the *Watan* Act and the *watan* system were contrary to the provisions

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[11]Ambedkar's *Letters to Gaekwad*, pp. 336-338.

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[7]Kharat, *Muktisangram,* p. 25.
[8]*Ibid,* p. 25.
[9]*Navayug,* p. 33, special number.

Classes and aboriginal tribes of the Presidency, and to recommend measures for their uplift. A. V. Thakkar, Ambedkar and Solanki were on the Committee. Although a Member of the Committee, Ambedkar himself experienced insulting treatment in his tours. A headmaster of a primary local board school did not allow him to enter the class-room. At Chalisgaon, tonga-drivers refused to carry him. The Starte Committee submitted its Report in March 1930. It recommended an increase in the number of scholarships and hostels for Depressed Classes students; provision of scholarships for the industrial training of apprentices in mills and railway workshops, a scholarship for studying abroad in engineering works, and the appointment of a special officer to look after these arrangements. It recommended that the Depressed Classes be recruited to police and military services. It stressed the urgency of establishing a strong social centre conducting social and cultural activities for the Depressed Classes.

The Congress movement for the removal of untouchability was broadened after Gandhiji's fast which ended in the Poona Pact....the word 'Harijan' replaced the old 'untouchable' and 'Depressed Classes'. A Bill was introduced in the Bombay Legislative Assembly to give the word 'Harijan' (men of God) statutory recognition. Ambedkar remarked that the name 'Harijan' became practically equivalent to the term *Asprishya* (untouchable). It was an attempt to give the untouchable a sweet name.[14] Referring to the Harijan Fund started by Gandhiji he said that its object was to enslave the untouchables to the camp of caste Hindus. He stressed the need for a special census and told Gandhiji that the activities of the Anti-untouchability League (inspired by him) should be mainly directed to the economic, educational and social improvement of the Depressed Classes, rather than to the problem of temple-entry and inter-dining. He urged the League to launch a campaign for civic rights.

[14] *Bombay Legislative Assembly Debates*, Vol. II (1938), p. 512.

This Depressed Classes League was renamed the Harijan Sevak Sangh by Gandhiji. Ambedkar was on the Central Board but he soon severed his connections with the Sangh, as many Depressed Classes leaders thought that to Gandhiji removal of untouchability was a platform and not a programme. The Harijan Sevak Sangh was humanitarian in its outlook, relied on the change of heart ideology of Gandhiji, and opposed the organisations of Ambedkar at every step. The Sangh worked for Harijans as a branch of the Congress[15] Regarding the exclusion of the untouchables from the management of the Sangh, Gandhiji was of opinion that the welfare work of the Sangh was a penance which the Hindus had to do for the sin of untouchability. Ambedkar remarked that the Sangh was a political organisation the aim of which was to draw the untouchables into the Congress fold. The basis of his politics lay in the proposition that the untouchables were not a sub-section of the Hindus, but a distinct element in the national life of India, as separate and distinct as the Muslims. He wanted separate political rights as against the caste Hindus.

Ambedkar formed the *Samata Sainik Dal* (Social Equality Army). Its aim was to dislodge all those values which conserved and fostered anti-human elements in the name of traditional and cultural heritage.[16] Ambedkar remarked that the principle of social equality was the corner-stone of a stable society. After the assassination of Gandhiji in 1948, the *Dal* was banned. Ambedkar was against disbanding the *Dal* and remarked that to disband it was an act of cowardice.

A. V. Thakkar published a letter to the press in which he accused Ambedkar of excessive favouritism for Harijans and contemptuous denial of justice to the Aboriginals. Ambedkar clarified his position that he had never claimed to be a universal leader of suffering humanity and remarked : 'Weightage

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[15]Kharat, *Muktisangram*, pp. 138-145.
[16]Ambedkar, *Annihilation of Caste*, pp. 78-79.

of aboriginals is possible only when scaling down the representation of Muslims will take place.'[17] He tried his best to safeguard the interests of his community.

Ambedkar urged that it was the duty of the Scheduled Castes to defend India's hard-won freedom. He asked his followers to forget the past differences with the Congress and other political parties. He hoped that his work on India's Constitution would help the Hindus to understand him and also show them how the accusations that he was anti-nationalist and pro-British were utterly untrue. While speaking on a Report of the Commissioner for Scheduled Castes and Scheduled Tribes in Rajya Sabha, he put across a new two-nation theory : one is the ruling nation, and the other a subject nation.[18] The thought that he was an untouchable by caste was always present in his mind. Giving details of life for 'Who's who' he introduced the phrase 'untouchable by caste.' He then mentioned his marriage in 1948 to Dr. Sharda Kabir of Bombay and said that she was a Brahmin by caste.[19] The thought of the future of his community always remained in his mind. In his last days he said, 'What will be the condition of my brethren in the villages?' and wept.[20]

Ambedkar asked Bhaurao Gaekwad to suspend the struggle for Mahar *Watan* Bill, because it antagonised the touchables. He emphasised that this struggle would jeopardise the interests of the Mahar community.[21] He asked his men to change the attitude of his followers in respect of *satyagraha;* in a way he urged his followers to discard *satyagraha* as a weapon;[22] and to place the demands of the Scheduled Castes before the Government. He asked them to take care that the movement did not

[17] *The Times of India,* 17-5-1945.
[18] *The Times of India,* 7-9-1954.
[19] Shean, *Nehru, The Years of Powers,* p. 235.
[20] *Mahanirvan Number,* p. 34.
[21] Ambedkar, *Letters to Gaekwad.*
[22] *Ibid* pp. 280-281.

turn into a mass *satyagraha*.[23] In his last speech in the Constituent Assembly he laid emphasis on constitutional means and warned that if those means failed, there would be nothing but anarchy.

[23]*Ibid*; pp. 332-334.

V

Struggle for Separate Electorates

AMBEDKAR WAS ONE of the few statesmen-politicians in India who took active part in all the deliberations of constitution-making, from the Montford Reforms (1919) to Cabinet Mission Scheme (1946). During this period he was the leader of his community.

Before the Morley-Minto Reforms, the Muslims had requested the Government not to register the untouchables as Hindus.[1] In 1916, the Lucknow Pact between the Congress and the Muslim league accepted the system of separate electorates. This Pact was defended by Tilak and opposed by Malaviya. The Lucknow Pact made the great error of accepting as inevitable the communal electoral division initiated by Lord Minto and Lord Morley.[2]

The Franchise Committee under the Chairmanship of Lord Southborough was appointed to deal with franchise problems in the light of Montford Reforms. This Committee consisted, among others, of Srinivas Sastri and Surendranath Banerjee as members and top-ranking nationalist leaders like Rajendra Prasad, Motilal Nehru, and Malaviya as witnesses. Ambedkar was called upon to give evidence before them. He demanded separate electorates and reserved seats for the Depressed Classes in proportion to their population. In addition, he demanded that

[1]Ambedkar, *Pakistan or Partition of India*, p. 235.
[2]Dutt, R. P., *India Today*, p. 376.

representatives of the untouchables must be elected by the votes of untouchables only. The Committee did not admit the claim of the untouchables to separate electorates. It allowed communal representation to Muslims, and nomination in the case of the Depressed Classes.[3]

A Statutory Commission was appointed under the Chairmanship of Sir John Simon on November 8, 1927. The non-Indian composition of the Commission roused the nationalist sentiment. A Conference of the leaders of the Congress, the Responsivists, the Moderates, the Nationalists led by Lajpat Rai and the Independents under Jinnah, passed a resolution recommending the boycott of the Commission. The Jinnah group in the Muslim League opposed and the Shafi group co-operated with the Commission.

The Central Government appointed a Committee for British India, and every Legislative Council elected its Provincial Committee to work with the Simon Commission. Ambedkar was elected on the Bombay Provincial Committee on August 3, 1928. His students in the Law College, Bombay boycotted his lectures. He was dubbed a British stooge.

Ambedkar remarked that there was really no link between the Hindus and the Depressed Classes. Therefore, they must be regarded as a distinct and independent community. He emphasised that seats should be reserved for them in the Legislatures and that the present practice of nominating one or two members should cease to exist. He said they should have at least 22 out of 140 seats in the Bombay Legislative Council. He claimed reservation of seats, accompanied by adult suffrage, and in the absence of such an arrangement, separate electorates. Lord Burnham, a member of the Simon Commission, asked him if he had any other proposal if he did not get either adult suffrage or separate electorates. Ambedkar replied that he must have either, adding that adult suffrage would counter mischief, if any.[4] He

[3] *Southborough Committee Report*, p. 135.

[4] *Indian Annual Register*, July-Dec. 1928, Vol. II, pp. 94-97.

differed with the Committee and did not sign the Committee's Report. He submitted a separate report on May 17, 1929. Eighteen Depressed Class associations gave evidence, 16 pleaded for separate electorates.

The Nehru Report

The All-Parties Conference convened by the Congress Party met in February and later in May 1928, and appointed a Committee under Pandit Motilal Nehru to draft a Swaraj Constitution for India. This was a first attempt at Constitution-making. It mainly aimed at closing the Hindu-Muslim breach. In the Report no special provisions were made for the representation of the Depressed Classes in the legislatures. The Report regarded special electorates and reservations of seats as 'unsound and harmful' and opposed nomination. It concluded, "adult suffrage will automatically raise their level and increase their political power."[5] The Simon Commission opined that the Nehru Report was not an agreed solution. Ambedkar criticised the constituencies formed in the Nehru Report and said that this arrangement was 'to preserve the upper class hegemony and Brahmanical rule in society.' He criticised the plan to keep the Hindus in the Muslim majority provinces at the mercy of Muslims as dangerous and said it was better to grant them separate electorates. He also criticised the demand of the Muslims for the grant of residuary powers to the constituent states, agreed to by the Nehru Report.

The Round Table Conferences

The British Government convened a Round Table Conference (R.T.C.) in London in 1930 to frame a Constitution for India, with a view to satisfying the demands of the people of India. The R.T.C. consisted of 89 members, out of which 16 were representatives of the three British parties, 53 Indian members

[5]*The Nehru Report*, p. 59.

representing various different interests, except the non-cooperating Congress, and 20 of the Indian Princely States. Ambedkar and Rao Bahadur Srinivasan represented the Depressed Classes. Ambedkar remarked that in a way it was a recognition of the independent position of the Scheduled Classes.

Ambedkar suggested that the untouchables should be named as non-caste Hindus, Protestant Hindus, or non-conformist Hindus. He clarified that the untouchables had a separate existence from Hindus. They were actually on a level between serfs and slaves. The Hindus called them their men only to usurp their rights[6] He thought of placing the problem of untouchables before the League of Nations.

The First Session of the R.T.C. opened on November 12, 1930. In his speech Ambedkar attacked the British Raj in India. He posed the question : "Has the British Government done anything to remove untouchability ?" and remarked that the wrongs against the untouchables had not been righted, although 150 years of British rule had passed He upheld the cause of Dominion Status. He said that the consent of the people should be the touchstone of the new constitution. The R.T.C. appointed nine sub-committees. Ambedkar served on the Minorities Sub-Committee, the Provincial Constitutions Sub-Committee, and the Services Sub-Committee. He demanded that the Depressed Classes should be regarded, for electoral purposes, as a separate community, and 'that they could not consent to any self-governing constitution for India unless their demands were met in a reasonable manner.'[7] He demanded common citizenship, free use of common rights and adequate representation in the legislatures, government services and in the cabinet.

As a result of the Gandhi-Irwin Pact on March 5, 1931, the Civil Disobedience Movement was withdrawn and Gandhiji promised to attend the Second Session of the R.T.C. in London.

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[6]Ambedkar, *Letters to Gaekwad*, pp. 98-99.

[7]Coupland, *The Constitutional Problem of India*, p. 120.

Gandhiji, Sarojini Naidu and Malaviya represented the Indian National Congress at the R.T.C. The Second Session began on September 7, 1931. The Conference was to re-examine and amplify the reports prepared by the Federal Structure Committee and the Minorities Committee. Ambedkar stressed that power should be shared by all communities in their respective proportions. He presented to the Minorities Committee a Supplementary Memorandum on the claims of the Depressed Classes for special representation. He advocated separate electorates. The leading representatives of the Muslims, the Depressed Classes, a section of the Christians, Europeans and Anglo-Indians jointly submitted a Memorandum. This was known as the Minority Pact. This Pact enraged Gandhiji. In the course of his speech he said that he had regard for Ambedkar's ability but added that Ambedkar's bitter experiences in life had warped his judgment. He said that he would not mind the untouchables being converted to Islam or Christianity and asserted that he would resist political rights of untouchables with his life (sic). Ambedkar did not reply to this argument of Gandhiji. He also did not sign the requisition of the members of the Minorities Committee authorizing the British Premier to settle the communal problem. Gandhiji signed it. In Provincial Constitutions Sub-Committee, Ambedkar demanded complete Provincial Autonomy.

The Rajah-Moonje Pact based on joint electorates with reservation of seats was criticised and opposed by Ambedkar. It was also repudiated by the All-India Depressed Classes Congress held at Kamptee in May 1932. This Congress stood behind Ambedkar and the minorities. The question of defining the Depressed Classes arose. The Indian Legislature Committee in its decision in 1916, the Educational Commissioner under the Government of India, and the Southborough Franchise Committee had grouped the Depressed Classes with the aboriginals, or Hill Tribes, or Criminals or others; but the Lothian Franchise Committee declared that the term should be applied only to those who were untouchables. This was the result of Ambedkar's efforts.

The Communal Award

On August 17, 1932, Ramsay MacDonald announced a provisional scheme of minority representation, commonly called the Communal Award. The scheme determined the number of seats in the provincial legislatures at approximately double the number in the existing councils. Separate electorates were retained for the minority communities, and for the Muslims both in Bengal and the Punjab, despite their numerical majority. Weightage was also conceded to the Muslims in the Provinces in which they were in a minority and to the Sikhs and Hindus in the Punjab. The Depressed Classes were now recognised as a minority community entitled to separate electorate. While creating a number of specially reserved constituencies for the Depressed Classes, it gave them an additional right to contest seats in the general constituencies with this provision that special electorate and reservation of seats would lapse after 20 years, automatically. For the first time, untouchables were given an independent political existence and the legal right to shape the future of the motherland. This can be recorded as a victory of Ambedkar's ideology of uplifting the untouchables.[8]

The Congress leaders at a meeting of the Working Committee in Bombay declared that the Congress Party neither accepted nor rejected the Communal Award.

According to Ambedkar, "the Communal Award gave the untouchables two benefits : (1) a fixed quota of seats to be elected by a separate electorate of untouchables; (2) a double vote, one to be used through separate electorates and the other to be used in general electorates."[9]

As regards separate electorates, he remarked, "we mean no harm to Hindu Society when we demand separate electorates. If we choose separate electorates we do so in order to avoid the total dependence on the sweet will of the caste Hindus in matters

[8]Bharat S. R., *Muktisangram*, p. 59.

[9]Ambedkar, *Congress and Gandhi*, p. 68.

affecting our destiny"[10] He charged Mahatmaji with widening the gulf between the Hindus and the Depressed Classes.

Gandhiji resented particularly the recognition given to the untouchables as a separate political entity. He thought that it meant 'the perpetual bar sinister'. He remarked, "I would not sell the vital interests of the untouchables even for the sake of winning the freedom of India."[11] He emphatically said that separate electorates and separate reservations were not the ways to remove 'the bar sinister.' He regarded untouchability as being no part of Hinduism. He said, "I would far rather that Hinduism died than that untouchability lived."[12] He thought the attitude taken by Ambedkar would create a division of Hinduism.

According to Gandhiji, if separate electorates were given then there would be a division among villagers and their lives as villagers would be miserable in villages, the strongholds of Hindu orthodoxy. So he thought it to be a "positive danger" to the untouchables. According to him, untouchability was a stigma on the Hindu religion and in the near future it would vanish. But separate electorates would perpetuate the stigma. He remarked, 'separate electorates to the untouchables will ensure them bondage in perpetuity.'[13] Ambedkar thought that separate electorates, adult franchise and fundamental rights in the Constitution would give them complete security.

The Poona Pact

Gandhiji said, 'We do not want on our register and on our census untouchables classified as a separate class. Sikhs may remain as such in perpetuity, so may Muslims, so may Europeans', He asked, 'Would untouchables remain untouchables in perpetuity?' He opposed every attempt at separating the untouchables from caste Hindus. He wrote a letter to Sir Samuel

[10] *Ibid*, p. 69.
[11] *Ibid*, p. 61.
[12] Desai, Mahadeo, *Diary*, p. 33.
[13] B. R. Nanda, *Mahatma Gandhi*, p. 345.

Hoare on March 11, 1932. He remarked therein that separate electorates would vivisect and disrupt the nation without doing any good to the Depressed Classes. Such electorates were neither a penance nor any remedy for the crushing degradation they have groaned under He said further, 'I informed His Majesty's Government that in the event of their decision creating separate electorates for the Depressed Classes I must fast unto death."[12] He said that the fast could only end if during its progress the British Government, of its motion, or under pressure of public opinion, revised their decision and withdrew their scheme of communal (separate) electorate for the Depressed Classes. The fast was to continue even if he was released.

Ambedkar described this proposed fast of Gandhi as a political stunt.[14] In a statement he said that it would have been justifiable if Gandhi had resorted to this extreme step for obtaining independence. Gandhi remarked, 'for me the abolition of separate electorates would be but the beginning of the end, and I would warn all those leaders assembled at Bombay and others against coming to any hasty decision . . My fast, I want to throw in the scales of justice, and if it wakes up caste Hindus from their slumber, and if they are roused to a sense of duty, it will have served its purpose.'[15]

As stated earlier, Gandhiji started his fast in Yeravada Central Jail. A conference of Hindu leaders was called in Bombay. Pandit Malaviya told the conference on September 19, 1932, to resolve the deadlock and save the life of Gandhiji and informed Ambedkar about it. To save the life of Gandhi it was necessary to alter the British Prime Minister's Award, and to amend it, it was necessary to get the approval of Ambedkar. All eyes of the nation turned to Ambedkar. In a furious campaign, he was called a monster, a traitor and a hireling. On the eve of the Conference, he issued a statement. He said,. . . 'The Mahatma

[14]D. G. Tendulkar, *Mahatma Gandhi*, Vol. III, p. 210.
[15]*Ibid*, pp. 205-206.

is not an immortal person, nor the Congress, . .Mahatmas have come and Mahatmas have gone. But the untouchables have remained as untouchables."[16]

Ambedkar with other leaders saw Gandhiji in Yeravada prison. Gandhiji suggested the application of the panel system to all the seats. Ambedkar accepted Gandhiji's suggestion He demanded 197 seats for Depressed Classes in the Provincial Assemblies and the leaders reduced the number to 126 He said that the system of primary election should terminate at the end of 10 years, but insisted that the question of reserved seats should be settled by referendum of the Depressed Classes at the end of another 15 years. The question of total number of seats was decided by granting 148 seats to the Depressed Classes in the Provincial Assemblies. It was also decided that 10 per cent of the seats of the Hindus from British India in the Central Assembly should be given to the Depressed Classes. Devdas Gandhi made a strong personal appeal to Ambedkar not to hold up an agreement by pressing for a referendum. Gandhiji said with a finality—"five years or my life."[17] But Gandhiji gave consent to 10 years. Instead of separate electorates granted under the Award, the Depressed Class leaders agreed to have elections in two phases. Four candidates would be elected from separate Depressed Class electorates and subsequently the general electorates would choose one of the four so elected earlier. The agreement was signed at 5 p.m. on Saturday, September 24, 1932. It went down in history as the Poona Pact. Ambedkar signed it on behalf of the Depressed Classes. This Poona Pact was accepted by the British Government thereby nullifying the 'Communal Award' of MacDonald, much to Gandhiji's satisfaction. Ambedkar commented, "The second vote given by the Communal Award was a priceless privilege. . .No caste Hindu candidate could have dared to neglect the untouchable in his constituency or be

[16]Keer, *op cit.*, p. 208.

[17]D. G. Tendulkar, *op cit.*, p. 210.

hostile to their interest if he was made dependent upon the votes of the untouchables."[18]

The Poona Pact increased the fixed quota of seats, but it also took away the right to the 'double' vote. The value of the second vote as a political weapon, was beyond reckoning. Disliked by the caste Hindus and disfavoured by the untouchables, the Pact was given recognition by both parties and was embodied in the Government of India Act, 1935.

According to Ambedkar, the defeat of the Scheduled Castes candidates in the General Elections was due to the voting system of the Poona Pact. Ambedkar initiated a resolution in the Executive of the Scheduled Castes Federation (on September 23, 1944) demanding separate electorates for the Depressed Classes.[19] In an interview he stated : "The Poona Pact must go. It has resulted in disenfranchising the 60 million untouchables. According to International Law no treaty was final and sacrosanct."[20]

Ambedkar was convinced that his failure in the 1952 general elections was due to joint electorates.[21] In a speech in the Rajya Sabha, on September 22, 1953 he said that he accepted the Poona Pact as inevitable because it was not possible for him to get more. He added, 'The Poona Pact gave a death-blow to the self-reliant movements of the Depressed classes.'[22] Even the Cabinet Mission's deliberations were disappointing to Ambedkar. He contended that the Congress did not represent the untouchables and demanded abrogation of the Poona Pact signed by him and Gandhiji had demanded the restoration of separate electorates as envisaged in MacDonald's 'Communal Award'.[23]

The basic idea behind all the deliberations was to establish

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[18]*Sapru Committee Report*, p. 220.
[19]*Delitbandhu*, special number, p. 27.
[20]*The Times of India*, 22-7-1946.
[21]Kharat, *op cit.*, p. 76.
[22]*Ibid*, p. 176.
[23]*Bombay Chronicle*, 7-11-1946.

the untouchables as a minority Ambedkar tried his level best to get basic rights for the minority. Speaking in the Constituent Assembly he said, " A Solution must be such that it will enable the majorities and minorities to merge someday into one " He remarked : "Minorities are an explosive force, which, if they errupt, can blow up the whole fabric of the state". About the nature of the majority he made the criticism, "The minorities have accepted the rule of majority which is basically a communal majority and not a political majority. It is for the majority to realise its duty not to discriminate against the minorities." In the end he said, "The moment the majority loses the habit of discrimination against the minority, the minorities can have no ground to exist. They will vanish."[21]

Harijan Movement

After the Poona Pact, the problem of the untouchables came to the forefront. The Congress movement for the removal of the curse of untouchability was broadened. Gandhiji started the All-India Anti-Untouchability League in September 1932. Ambedkar suggested that there should be a majority of untouchables on its different committees. He expressed the view that the activities of the Anti-Untouchability League should be mainly directed to the economic, educational and social improvement of the Depressed Classes rather than to the problem of temple-entry and inter-dining. He urged the League to launch a campaign for civic rights.

The Anti-Untouchability League was renamed 'Harijan Sevak Sangh', and Gandhiji started a weekly called '*Harijan*'. The new name was intended, it was said, to give new dignity to the untouchables and to impress on caste Hindus the need to give status and bring about their social amelioration.

The Harijan Sevak Sangh was humanitarian in its outlook. The exclusion of the Depressed Class leaders and workers from its

[21]*C. A. Debates*, Vol. VII, p. 39.

executive gradually aroused suspicion in their minds as to its bonafides. According to them, the Sangh worked among Harijans as a branch of the Congress, without taking a different and independent line of action; and opposed political organisations of Ambedkar at every step.[25] Gandhiji remarked that the welfare work of the Sangh meant a penance which the caste Hindus have to do for practising the sin of untouchability. Ambedkar emphasised the idea that the untouchables were not a sub-section of the Hindus, but a distinct element in the national life of India, as distinct and separate as the Muslims.

Ambedkar sent the following message to the first issue of 'Harijan' weekly started by Gandhiji. "I cannot give a message. The outcaste is a by-product of the caste system. There will be outcastes as long as there are castes. And nothing can emancipate outcaste except the destruction of the caste system."[26] To this Gandhiji replied, "untouchability is the product not of the caste system, but of the distinction of high and low, that has crept into Hinduism and is corroding it. The attack on untouchability is an attack upon this high and lowness. The present joint fight is restricted only to the removal of untouchability." Ambedkar's views were endorsed by some Congress liberals and radicals including Nehru. Gandhiji wanted Hindu society to put an end to untouchability and revert to the original system of four *varnas*. What Gandhiji evidently wanted was not to abolish caste as such but to restore the ancient system under which there were only four large groups.[27]

Away from Hinduism

The social and religious struggle of the untouchables took a different turn after the Mahad *satayagraha* in 1927. In every Depressed Castes conference, held after that event, resolutions

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[25] Kharat *Muktisangram*, pp 138-145.

[26] D. G. Tendulkar, *op cit.*, p. 236.

[27] G. S. Ghurye, *Caste and Race in India*, pp. 182-195.

declaring renunciation of Hinduism were passed. At the Jalgaon Conference on May 29, 1929 a resolution was passed and called all members of the depressed classes to embrace any religion other than Hinduism. At the Yeola (Dist. Nasik, Maharashtra) Conference on October 13, 1935, Ambedkar declared that he would not die a Hindu. He visualised a separate community outside the Hindu fold carving out for them a future worthy of free citizens.

The reactions to his resolve of renunciation of Hinduism were varied. Gandhiji remarked, 'Religion is not a matter of barter.'[29] The colleagues of Ambedkar, such as Sonlanki and Srinivasan expressed that untouchables should keep up their strength and fight for rights and principles. At the Maharashtra Untouchable Youths' Conference on January 12 and 13, 1936 held under the Presidentship of Professor N. Shivraj, Ambedkar warned his people against the erroneous view that conversion would relieve them from hell and would lead them to the paradise of equality. They would be required to fight for liberty and equality. For sometime, Ambedkar favoured Sikhism because he thought that it meant remaining within the fold of Hindu culture. He said, 'Conversion to Islam or Christianity will de-nationalise the Depressed Classes.'[30] It was his conviction that the amelioration of the untouchables was not possible under Hinduism but could be brought about by conversion alone.

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[29] *Harijan*, 21-3-1936.

[30] *The Times of India*, 24-7-1936.

VI

In The Bombay Legislative Council

THE DEPRESSED CLASSES were organised under the Depressed Classes Mission. The main features of the programme before the Depressed Classes were as under : to give vent to social grievances, raise a voice against the unjust treatment of the caste Hindus, to make available educational facilities to them, ameliorate their economic conditions, etc. The Depressed Classes were not a political force in any form before the Montford Reforms of 1919. Representations on particular issues were made. There were no political demands. Ambedkar and Srinivasan represented the Depressed Classes at the Round Table Conferences. The Depressed Classes were not represented in any political conference before.

According to the Government of India Act 1935, General Elections were to take place in 1937. The Indian National Congress was one of the biggest parties having a following in every province. There were all the Liberals, the Muslim League and others, but the untouchables had no political party of their own. At this critical time Ambedkar took the lead and formed the Independent Labour Party (I.L.P.) in August 1936.

The I. L. P. fought the General Elections in the old Bombay Presidency, because the Party functioned only in the Bombay Presidency. Out of the 15 seats assigned to the Scheduled Classes in Bombay Presidency, it captured 13 and in addition, it won 2 general seats. Ambedkar fought his election in

Bombay and was elected after defeating the Congress candidate P. Balu (a Chamar), the famous cricketeer. The Congress entered the legislatures with a view to wrecking the 1935 Constitution, but Ambedkar was determined to work it. The I.L.P. drew its major following from the Mahars, because, as Ambedkar stated, they had a majority in the Depressed Classes[1] Ambedkar attempted to prove that the Congress did not represent the untouchables.

Ambedkar originally thought of organising, exclusively, a party of the Depressed Classes. He realised, however, that the time for organizing communal parties was over. He had discussions with his friends and he thought that political cooperation between other classes and the Depressed Classes was a necessity. About the word, 'Labour', he clarified, "The Party was a labour organisation in the sense that its programme was mainly to advance the welfare of the labouring classes . . the word 'Labour' is used instead of the words 'Depressed Classes', because 'Labour' includes the 'Depressed Classes' as well."[2]

The Congress programme was based on the Karachi Congress Resolution (1931) on Fundamental Rights. Ambedkar assimilated those principles and formed his own programme, it was comprehensive and radical. It was socialist in flavour, and its aim was 'mainly to advance the welfare of the labouring masses'. It revealed both Ambedkar's attachment to the British system of parliamentary democracy, and his hope that the party would be more than a Scheduled Class group. It accepted the 'principle of State management and State ownership of the people'. The programme was radical and ambitious.

The Congress formed Ministries in eight provinces in 1937. During its tenure in office, the I.L.P. worked as an opposition party in the Bombay Presidency. It vehemently criticised the policies of the Congress regarding tenancy, the anti-strike Bill,

[1]*Janata*, 8-7-1939.
[2]*Manifesto of the I.L.P.*

the Khoti Bill, and other ameliorative measures. Ambedkar's speeches in the Bombay Council were well prepared, thought-provoking and penetrating. The I.L.P. served as an eye-opener and a guide to the people. There was no cooperation between the Congress and the I L.P. It protested the Wardha Scheme of Education. It failed to secure a base among the caste Hindu workers.

Ambedkar had to fight Brahminism, so he tried to organise separate unions for the untouchable workers within the labour movement. He did not build a systematic political organisation. The Depressed Class people had an emotional sense of identity.

The Industrial Disputes Bill, introduced in the Bombay Legislative Council (1938), was meant to make provision for the promotion of peaceful and amicable settlement of industrial disputes, by conciliation and arbitration. According to Ambedkar, 'a strike is nothing more than a breach of contract of service. This may be a civil wrong or a crime."[3] He regarded it only a civil wrong and not a crime. According to him, a strike is simply another name for the right to freedom. He contended that the Industrial Disputes Bill was reducing workers to a state of slavery. He described the Bill as 'The Workers Civil Liberties Suspension Act'. This Bill was reactionary and retrograde and was described as a 'mockery of democracy'. Ambedkar called the Bill 'bad, bloody and brutal'.[4] All the opposition parties opposed the Bill. To organise the support of the workers, a strike was declared on November 7, 1938. About 60 trade union organisations in Bombay gave the call for a general strike to protest this Act. The Congress Socialists refused their support as they thought that Ambedkar was using the strike to strengthen his Party. The Communists supported the strike. Congress leaders arranged anti-strike meetings. It was the first successful strike launched against a popular Government by labour leaders in the teeth of opposition from the vested interests. It was an

[3]*Bombay Legislative Assembly Debates,* 1938, Vol. IV, p. 1334.
[4]*Debates,* 1938, Vol. IV, p. 1359.

United Front with the Communists. The Communist leaders were criticised for making common cause with 'communal' leaders like Ambedkar and Jamnadas Mehta This was the first and last occasion when Ambedkar and the Communists came together for joint action against the vested interests.

At the outbreak of the Second World War on September 1, 1939, the Government of India declared India a belligerent country. Different Indian leaders viewed it differently. The Indian Liberal leaders favoured unconditional help to Government in their war efforts Jinnah stated that the British should create a sense of security and salvation in the minds of the Indian Muslims On September 11, the Viceroy announced, that under the existing conditions, they had no choice but to hold the Federation in suspension. Jinnah was jubilant at this declaration Ambedkar disagreed with those who held that England's difficulty was India's opportunity and added that Indians should not go in for new masters. According to him, India should remain within the British Commonwealth of Nations and strive to achieve the status of an equal partner therein. He reminded the British Government how they had agreed at the Round Table Conference that the defence of India was to be treated as the responsibility of India. On September 14, the Congress leaders declared that a free democratic India would gladly associate herself with the free nations for mutual defence and asked the British Government to declare their war aims in regard to democracy and imperialism, particularly with reference to India.

A statement was issued by seven leaders declaring that Government's claim that the Congress was an all representative body, was a "fascist one and would prove a death-blow to Indian democracy. The Viceroy of India had interviews with about 50 Indian Leaders, such as Gandhiji, Jinnah, Nehru, Savarkar, Patel, Rajendra Prasad, Subhas Bose, Ambedkar and others. Ambedkar met the Viceroy on October 9. He complained to him that the working of the Poona Pact had been far from satisfactory. In a statement, the Viceroy declared that at

the end of the war the Government of India Act would be revised in consultation with all the leading parties in India and that no substantial political advance would be made without the consent of the minorities. He added that a consultative committee representing all parties would be formed during the war. The Working Committee of the Congress declared the Viceroy's Statement to be wholly unsatisfactory The Congress thought that any help to Great Britain would amount to endorsement of her imperial policy; so they asked all the Provincial Ministries to tender their resignations Ambedkar had talks with Pandit Nehru in the third week of october. Immediately after this, discussions were held between Ambedkar and the Congress Leaders in Bombay. Mahadeo Desai had specially come from Wardha for these discussions

The Congress Ministries introduced the War Resolution in all Provincial Assemblies. Ambedkar blamed the Bombay Ministry for not having tabled the demand in the name of the country, but in obedience to the Congress High Command. He said that he would not accept political dominance and remarked how the majority were denying liberty, equality and fraternity to the untouchables He made clear that there was only a negligible number of members of the Depressed Classes in the administration He said that he would take precedence of untouchables' interests over the interests of the country.

The Congress Ministries resigned in the first week of November, 1939, in obedience to the mandate of the Congress High Command Jinnah appealed to his community to observe a 'Day of Deliverance' on December 22. Ambedkar joined Jinnah as he declared that the move was anti-Congress, and therefore purely political.[5] Ambedkar and his Independent Labour Party also participated in the 'Day of Deliverance' function. In a statement to the press, he suggested the appointment of a Royal Commission to investigate cases of tyranny and oppression by the Congress Ministries.

[5] *The Times of India*, 19-12-1939.

VII

Labour Member

AMBEDKAR JOINED THE Viceroy's Executive Council as Labour Member in July 1942. It was the period of the 'Quit India' movement. The last battle against British Imperialism was in full swing. Decisive constitutional developments and the formation of the All-India Scheduled Castes Federation took place.

During the visit of the Cripps mission to India in 1942, Ambedkar and M. C. Rajah saw Sir Stafford Cripps on March 30 and April 1. The British Government had sent Sir Stafford with concrete proposals to end the deadlock in India. Ambedkar and Rajah complained that the Cripps Proposals were calculated to do the greatest harm to the Depressed Classes and were sure to place them under an unmitigated system of Hindu rule. They sought an assurance from Sir Stafford that the Depressed Classes would be included in the racial and religious minorities for whose protection a special treaty was to be signed between the British Government and the Constituent Assembly. Cripps explained that the provisions of the proposed treaty would be 'along the lines of the League of Nations Minority Treaties'. Ambedkar and Rajah were not satisfied.[1]

Ambedkar told the Governor of Bombay that he felt bitterly disillusioned and humiliated because Cripps not only went back on the August 1940 declaration but behaved as if

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[1]Nagarkar, V., *Genesis of Pakistan*, pp. 352-353.

none except the Congress and the League mattered. In his report to the Viceroy Lord Linlithgow, Lumley (Governor of Bombay) pointed out that Ambedkar had been disgruntled since his non-inclusion in the Executive Council in the previous year and was also facing serious financial difficulties He recommended his inclusion in the Council.[2]

On July 2, 1942, Ambedkar's name was included in the Executive Council of the Viceroy making the strength of Indians 14 as against five Europeans. Sir C P. Ramaswami Iyer, Sir Muhammad Usman and Sir J P. Srivastava were his new colleagues. It was the first time in the history of the country that an untouchable Hindu had been appointed a Member of the Executive Council of the Government of India. He received hundreds of congratulatory messages from leaders including M. C. Rajah and several other admirers. According to him, it was a death-blow to Brahminism. He telegraphically took charge of Labour Portfolio on the morning of July 20, 1942, from Nagpur.

He accepted the post of Labour Member of the Viceroy's Executive Council with a view to capturing posts of authority. 'If it is not done' he said, 'then the untouchables will not be a ruling race'.[3] He made it clear that he would endeavour to see that no restraint was placed on the liberties of any class of people, for all time. In all battles between employers and workers he gave the assurance that he would be on the side of labour[4] He said that labour ought to work for the establishment of a Labour Government in India. It was not enough that India should get Swaraj; it was more important in whose hands the Swaraj would be.[5]

On November 13, 1942, Ambedkar made a speech from the Bombay Station of All India Radio He said that the Second

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[2]*Ibid*, p. 355.

[3]Ambedkar's *Letters to Gaekwad*, p. 214.

[4]*The Times of India*, 27-7-1942.

[5]Ambedkar, *The Annihilation of Caste*, p. 17.

World War was not a war for the division of the world's territories He urged labour to fight for victory over Nazism He said that to abolish war, the war must be won and a just peace established In a paper which he wrote for the Pacific Relations Committee, he appealed to the American people not to be misled by the Congress Hindu propaganda.

On May 7, 1943 the third meeting of the Standing Labour Committee set up by the Tripartite Labour Conference met at the Bombay Secretariat under the presidentship of Ambedkar. The setting up of Joint Labour Management Committees (on the model of the U. K. and the U S A) in factories and industrial units, employed in war work, was considered The second question was the establishment of Employment Exchange

The second session of the Tripartite Labour Conference was held at New Delhi on September 6 and 7, 1943 In his presidential speech, Ambedkar emphasised the need to set up a machinery to investigate questions of wages and earnings, and to plan a policy of social security for labour. He remarked that he had secured eignt and one third per cent appointments for the Depressed Classes, reserved seats for technical education of Depressed Classes students in London and one more seat in the Central Assembly. One seat was created for them in the Council of States.

In April 1944, Ambedkar moved an amending Bill proposing holidays with pay for industrial workers employed in 'perennial' factories. He justified compulsory conciliation or arbitration as it was advantagenous to labour. He hoped to make that principle a permanent feature of the Labour Code.

The Seventh Indian Labour Conference met in Delhi on November 27, 1945. In his presidential address, Ambedkar said that labour should ask the capitalists why they did not spend money on the raising of labour's standard.

In the first week of December 1945, in his inaugural address to the Conference of Regional Labour Commissioners, Ambedkar suggested some solutions towards establishing industrial peace.

According to him, a conciliation machinery, amendment of the Trade Disputes Act and minimum wage legislation were necessary He said that industrial peace was possible on the basis of law, but not certain; just on the basis of power, it was not possible. It could be hoped for if it could be based on social justice. A triangular approach could be suitable. He observed that by elimination of exploitation, by labour welfare and by maintaining proper industrial relations industrial peace can be guaranteed

Ambedkar resigned membership of the Viceroy's Executive Council in the last week of May 1946. The Viceroy had declared that the British Government decided to set up a new Government with representatives of the successful legislative parties.

One important phase of Ambedkar's life ended

Quit India Movement

The All India Congress Committee met at Bombay on August 7, 1942. On August 8, it adopted the Working Committee's resolution, popularly known as the 'Quit India' Resolution. The session concluded with a moving exhortation by Gandhiji to 'Do or Die'. Early next morning, all the Congress leaders including Gandhiji, were arrested. Every front-rank leader was behind bars. All strata of the nation were left stunned and dazed. All that they knew and remembered was Gandhiji's clarion call of 'Do or Die'. And tens of thousands of them 'did' and many 'died', in consequence. They knew that this was the final struggle.

Ambedkar described Gandhiji's all-out open rebellion as both irresponsible and insane, and a bankruptcy of statesmanship. He thought that if the forces of democracy won, no one could stand in the way of India's independence. The Congress papers in a bitter criticism, stated that Ambedkar justified the British Government's policy, as a return gift for the Labour Membership of the Viceroy's Executive Council? After the August

struggle, the Viceroy's Executive met immediately and resolved that the decision of the Congress was a challenge to Government. The Ambedkarites, like the Muslim Leaguers and the Hindu Mahasabhaites, kept aloof from the struggle and concentrated their efforts on militarisation.

Gandhiji started a twenty-one-day fast on February 10, 1943. M S. Aney, H. P. Modi, and N. R. Sarkar, the three members of the Viceroy's Executive Council resigned, but Ambedkar and J. P. Srivastava remained unmoved.

Replying to the address of the Ahmedabad Municipality, he remarked that the drastic action taken by the Government in August 1942 was justifiable; otherwise India would have been overrun by the Japanese and the Germans. This justification of the repression of the Government of the 'Quit India' movement roused the sentiment of the people and added to their earlier prejudices. It was the main cause of the unbridgeable gap that separated the Depressed Classes from the rest of the people during the years of the struggle for freedom.

Constitutional Developments

Gandhiji was released from internment in the Aga Khan Palace in Poona. Ambedkar in his letter to Gandhiji observed that in addition to the settlement of the Hindu-Muslim problem the settlement of the problem of the Hindu-untouchables was necessary, if the Indian political goal was to be achieved. In his letter dated August 6, 1944, Gandhiji replied that with him the question of the Depressed Classes was connected with religious and social reform.

At the end of August 1944, replying to the address of the Scheduled Castes organisations in Calcutta, Ambedkar said that the new constitution would make India a dominion. He declared that it was good on the part of the Viceroy to tell Gandhiji that for the transfer of power a tripartite agreement was necessary among the Hindus, Muslims and the Depressed Classes. He said that he would join any political organisation which conceded his

demands. Replying to an address by Madras Municipal Corporation, Ambedkar said that history did not warrant the assumption that once a parliamentary Government was established on adult suffrage, it would end all sufferings. He added that the capture of political power was far more important than organizing trade unions.

During the latter part of 1944, the Sapru Committee was busy preparing proposals to solve the Indian deadlock. Ambedkar refused to cooperate with it as some of the members of the Committee, he thought, did not inspire any confidence in him.

Leaders of different parties were trying to solve the political deadlock. Ambedkar unfolded his plan on May 6, 1945 in the annual session of the Scheduled Castes Federation (S. C. F.) at Parel in Bombay. He proposed another scheme for constitutional reforms based on the following principles—(1) majority rule is untenable in theory and unjustifiable in practice; (2) the Hindus could not claim absolute majority of representation on the basis of their numbers, at best, they could look forward to a relative majority; (3) the 'relative' majority representation to the Hindus should not be so large as to enable them to establish their rule with the help of small minorities; (4) at the same time a combination of major minorities should not have such representation as to enable them to secure an absolute majority; (5) the weightage taken from the majority should be distributed among the minorities in inverse proportion to their social standing; and (6) all minorities put together should have absolute majority of representation in the legislatures.[8]

On the basis of these proposals Ambedkar recommended that in the Central Assembly, 40 per cent representation should go to the Hindus, 32 per cent to the Muslims, 20 per cent to the Scheduled Castes, 3 per cent to the Christians, 4 per cent to the Sikhs and 1 per cent to the Anglo-Indians. In other words, he wanted to go back to the Minorities Pact entered into, under the leadership of the Aga Khan, during the Round Table Conference

[8]Nagarkar, *op. cit.*, pp. 383-84.

in the nineteen thirties. He proposed weightages to be given to the minorities communities in their representation in the legislatures. He proposed an united India. According to him, his plan promised Muslims better security, and safety from the fear of Hindu domination. According to him, the aboriginals were not to get any representation, because, he thought, that they had no political maturity. He hoped that the S.C.F. would act as the balancing party. He opposed the proposal for the Constituent Assembly, because, he thought that such a proposal might be dangerous as it would lead the country into civil war. His plan rejected the Sapru Committee Report. He proposed that the Prime Minister and other caste Hindu Ministers should be elected by the representatives of the minorities, while the representatives of the minorities in the Ministry were to be elected by the minorities themselves. He defended Dominion Status as against Independence as he thought Dominion Status, according to International Law, connoted perfect sovereignty.

The Wavell Plan in June 1945 was followed by the Simla Conference. Ambedkar being a member of the Viceroy's Executive Council, could not participate in the deliberations, but he prepared the case for the Scheduled Castes. He was of the view that the Scheduled Castes should have three seats in the Central Executive on the basis of population, if the Muslims have five. The Congress insisted on Muslim nominees of its own. The Simla Conference broke up on the problems of the personnel of the interim Ministry.

Lord Wavell announced general elections. All parties started election campaigns. Ambedkar commenced his election work at a meeting in Poona on October 4. He stressed that the Scheduled Castes should not believe in the Congress leadership, because, the latter was a tool in the hands of the capitalists and those socially indifferent. Congress leadership never tried to remove the disabilities and grievances of the untouchables. He urged the latter to develop themselves into a ruling race. He

expected that the Constitution-making body would be elected by the provincial legislatures.

The British Parliamentary Delegation interviewed Ambedkar on January 10, 1946. He declared that if Swaraj meant government by majority, with the cooperation and consent of the minorities, he would welcome such a Swaraj.

The British Cabinet Delegation reached New Delhi on March 24, 1946. Ambedkar was interviewed on April 5. He placed a memorandum before the Cabinet Mission recommending separate electorates for the Scheduled Castes. The memorandum included safeguards such as a new settlement, appointment of a settlement commission and adequate representation in the legislatures and executives, public services and public service commissions. The memorandum urged that money should be earmarked for the education of the Depressed Classes. The 'State Paper', issued by the Commission had no reference to the demands of the Scheduled Castes.

In September 1946, Ambedkar went to England to plead for constitutional safeguards for the untouchables, after withdrawal of the British from India, which he visualised in the near future. He felt such safeguards alone could rectify the wrong done to the untouchables by the Cabinet Mission.

Ambedkar's main function was to demand 'separateness' from the caste Hindu fold. M. R. Jayakar in a letter to Sapru (dated April 7, 1941) wrote : The Depressed Classes, under Ambedkar's guidance, are becoming more conscious of their separateness and not of their unity with Hinduism, and perhaps, in a short time, a cry will go up for *Maharstan*.[7]

Scheduled Castes Federation

After his taking over the labour Portfolio, a conference of the Depressed Classes was organised to congratulate Ambedkar on his membership of the Viceroy's Executive Council. The speeches therein revealed the necessity for organising an all-India

[7] *Sapru Collection*, Calcutta National Library—Letter J. 65.

political party of Depressed Classes. The old I. L. P. was transformed into the All-India Scheduled Castes Federation (AISCF). N. Sivaraj was chosen as the president of the conference. Ambedkar remarked that if the government granted political rights to the Hindus, they would exploit the untouchables. He equated one party democracy to despotism. To him, despotism, native or alien, was antithetical to freedom.* The conference put forth the demand of the Depressed Classes for the establishment of separate village settlements at the cost of the government. The 'Hindu' of Madras criticised that it might perpetuate untouchability.

The annual session of the S.C.F. met in Kanpur on January 29, 1943. N. Sivaraj, the President, said that the Depressed Classes were not against the transfer of power provided the demands of the Depressed Classes set forth at the Nagpur session in July 1942 were conceded. In his speech, Ambedkar said that if the Depressed Classes did not get a proper share in the conduct of the national Government, they would launch a struggle to achieve that objective.

The manifesto of the S. C. F. enunciated the following principles : religious, economic and political freedom, right to equality of opportunity; State responsibility to make every Indian free from wānt or fear; maintenance of liberty, equality and fraternity redemption from oppression and exploitation of man by man, of class by class and of nation by nation; and the parliamentary system of Government.

The S. C. F. started election propaganda. A provincial conference was called at Ahmedabad on November 29 and 30, 1945. In the election campaign, Ambedkar made speeches in every province. In his speeches, he emphasised that any constitution without their approval would not be binding on them. He emphasised equal rights and no patronage. He declared that he was ready to abide by the verdict of an impartial International

*Ambedkar, *Ranade, Gandhi and Jinnah*, p. 75.

Tribunal. Sardar Patel commented that Ambedkar's aspirations were legitimate but his ways were wrong. Scheduled castes people sent letters in hundreds to Sardar Patel stating how the Poona Pact had proved a curse to them.

In the general elections of 1946, the S. C. F. was completely defeated.

VIII

Cabinet Minister

Interim Government

THE TRIAL OF the I.N.A. prisoners in the months of November and December 1945 at the Red Fort in Delhi, and the widespread strike by the Royal Indian Navy in Bombay materially contributed to the rising tide of Indian nationalism, and to the growth of suspicion and conflict between the Indian people and the British Government. It became obvious that political subjugation of India could not be continued any longer.

The Cabinet Mission arrived in New Delhi on March 24, 1946. The Congress was opposed to any executive or legislative machinery for a group of provinces or units of the federation. It was also opposed to parity of representation as between groups of provinces in the Union Executive or Legislature. The Muslim League demanded parity of representation between two groups of provinces in the Union Executive or Legislature. It also demanded two constitution-making bodies for two groups of provinces; one for the Pakistan and the other group consisting of the remaining provinces. The Simla Conference failed to achieve its objectives and broke up on May 12, 1946.

The object of the Mission was, it was stated, not to lay down the details of the constitution but to set up a Constituent Assembly—a machinery whereby a constitution could be framed

by Indians for Indians. The Mission recognised only three main communities in India—General, Muslim and Sikh. The League accepted it in principle, but 'the sovereign Pakistan' remained the objective of the Muslims in India. The Congress was opposed to 'parity' in any form. Jinnah insisted on 'parity'.

The Viceroy, in concurrence with the Cabinet Mission, put forward a proposal for an Interim Government consisting of 14 members of whom 6 were to come from the Congress including a Scheduled Caste member, 5 from the Muslim League, 1 Sikh, 1 Parsee and 1 Indian Christian. The proposal was more in the nature of an award than a recommendation. Pandit Nehru asserted that the Congress had agreed only to join the Constituent Assembly. The League decided to stay out from the Interim Government.

On August 16, 1946, the Muslim League declared 'Direct Action Day'; it was Jinnah's reply to Wavell's invitation to Jawaharlal Nehru to form the Government. Violence against Hindus spread to East and West Bengal and the Hindus retaliated against the Muslims in Bihar and U.P.

The new Government took office on September 2, 1946. Jinnah informed the Viceroy on September 13, 1946 of the intention of the League to join the Interim Government. But, shortly after the representatives of the Muslim League had joined the Interim Government, Jinnah declared that the League adhered to its demand for Pakistan and two Constituent Assemblies. Having joined the Government, the representatives of the Muslim League repudiated joint responsibility and obstructed the work of the Government. The Congress members of the Interim Government threatened to resign. "If these things continue, a struggle on a large scale is inevitable", said Pandit Nehru.[1]

Ambedkar's own proposal was that the tasks envisaged for the Constituent Assembly should be divided into two classes : (1) constitutional and (2) communal. Constitutional questions

[1]Munshi, *The Pilgrimage to Freedom*, I, p. 109.

should be referred to a commission presided over by an eminent constitutional lawyer from the Great Britain or the U.S.A. The other members should be one Hindu and one Muslim. The terms of reference should be the Government of India Act, 1935. Communal questions should be referred to a conference of the leaders of the different communities. If the conference failed to arrive at an agreed solution, His Majesty's Government should make an award. He claimed that before they left, the British must ensure that the new constitution guaranteed to the Scheduled Castes the elementary human rights of life, liberty and pursuit of happiness and that it restored their separate electorates and gave them the other safeguards which they demanded.[2] Jagjivan Ram, Congress Harijan leader, added that they were opposed to Ambedkar's claims to represent the Scheduled Caste people. In a statement, Ambedkar said that the Cabinet Mission's decisions constituted a departure from established policy. The recognition of untouchables in the Round Table Conference, the Communal Award, the 'August' offer and the speeches of Amery and Wavell had been turned down. He wanted to press His Majesty's Government: (1) to declare that it regarded the untouchables as a minority; (2) to declare whether it would institute machinery, to examine whether the safeguards for minorities, framed by the Constituent Assembly, were adequate and real; (3) to declare if it would insist upon the Constitution, framed by the Constituent Assembly, containing clauses circumscribing the power of the future Indian Legislature to do away with minority safeguards by a bare majority.[3]

The Members of the Mission argued that Ambedkar's following was confined to the Scheduled Castes in the Bombay Presidency and the Central Provinces only. Ambedkar claimed that his party had all-India support.

In August 1946, Ambedkar and N. Shivaraj went to London

[2]Menon, V. P., *The Transfer of Power*, p. 65.

[3]*Bombay University Ambedkar Collections.*

and explained to Attlee how the Cabinet Mission has trampled under the assurances given by the Government to the Scheduled Classes.

The British Parliament passed the Act of Indian Independence on July 15, 1947. On August 3, the names of Cabinet Ministers were announced. Ambedkar was included in the first Cabinet of Independent India as the Law Minister. His friends and admirers showered congratulatory messages on him. He was the first untouchable Hindu Minister in the Central Cabinet of India.

On August 15, 1947 India became a free nation. The dreams of the great seers of the nationalist movement like Dadabhai Naoroji, Tilak, Gokhale, Lajpat Rai, B. C. Pal, Gandhiji, Nehru, Subhas Bose and others and the sacrifice of innumerable martyrs became a reality. The British flag was lowered for ever and in its place the tri-colour was unfurled. But the happiness of independence was marked by communal violence.

Ambedkar saw the new situation and he forgot his anti-Congress and anti-Gandhi attitude. He rose to the occasion. He was elected a member of the Constituent Assembly from Bengal, but after partition he lost his seat. He was chosen by the Bombay Legislative Congress Party in place of Dr. M. R. Jayakar who had resigned earlier.

Hindu Code Bill

According to Ambedkar, the country had for practical purposes a Civil Code, but as regards marriage and succession, the Civil Law was ineffective. He agreed with the view that Muslim personal law was immutable and uniform throughout the whole of India. He said that Shariat Law was not applicable to the North-West Frontier Province up to 1935. That region followed the Hindu Law in succession. In 1939, the Central Legislature applied the Shariat Law to N.W.F.P. The Legislature had to intervene in 1937 and to pass an enactment applying the Shariat Law to the rest of India. In North Malabar,

Muslims followed Matriarchal Law. Ambedkar said, "...it would not be open to any Muslim to say that the framers of the Civil Code had done great violence to the sentiments of the Muslim community. The fear is nullified."[4]

The Hindu Code introduced only four new points in the existing law. These were: (1) abolition of the doctrine of rights by birth; (2) absolute rights over property given to women; (3) a share was given to the daughter and (4) provisions for divorce. These provisions were new, but there was nothing anti-religious or anti-social in them.[5] The Hindu Law was not uniform for all Hindus. In these circumstances codification was the only solution. The great jurists favoured codification. Dr. P. V. Kane also supported it. It was a necessity. It aimed at the consolidation of Hindu society. Ambedkar contended that the enactment of the present code was a natural consequence of the adoption of the Constitution of India.

The Hindu Code was consistent with the Constitution of India. Article 15 stated, "The State shall not discriminate against any citizen on the ground of place of birth." Ambedkar contended that the present system of Hindu Law was inconsistent with the provisions of the Fundamental Rights in the Constitution. The Code aimed at making it consistent with the Constitution.

Tracing the history of the Hindu Code Bill, we come across a Hindu Law Committee appointed by the Government of India in 1941 with Shri B. N. Rau as Chairman. The Rau Committee recommended the codification of Hindu Law in gradual stages. The Draft Bill was introduced in the Central Legislature in 1943 and 1947 but it had to face fierce opposition from orthodox Hindus.

Ambedkar regarded the codification as a continuation of the Indian Constitution. Ambedkar and 16 others were members

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[4]*C. A. Debates*, Vol. VII, pp. 550-551.
[5]Tope and Ursekar, *Hindu Code*, by Kokje, Preface.

of the Select Committee. The Report of the Committee to amending and codifying certain branches of the Hindu Law was presented to the Constituent Assembly of India (Legislative) on August 12, 1948. The Report contained the following parts—Preliminary, Marriage and Divorce, Adoption, Minority and Guardianship, Joint Family Property, Women's Property, Succession, Maintenance and Miscellaneous.

Ambedkar revised and submitted the Report to the Constituent Assembly (Legislative) in October 1948. The Bill was opposed by different sections of the Hindus. Nehru declared that he would resign if the Hindu Code Bill was not passed by Parliament. Sardar Patel declared his opposition to the Bill.

Amidst such an atmosphere Ambedkar introduced the Hindu Code Bill on February 5, 1951. He said that the Hindu Code would be uniform throughout India. On the point of secularism, he said that the idea of a Secular State in the Constitution did not mean that they could abolish religion. He rejected the suggestion for a referendum on the ground that Parliament was sovereign and competent to make and unmake laws. The debate continued for three days and the consideration of the Bill was postponed to the next session which was to meet in September 1951. Ambedkar desired to pilot the Hindu Code Bill through Parliament before the General Elections (1952). Nehru suggested that the Divorce and Marriage part of the Bill should be treated as a separate Bill. The Bill was let down in a tragic manner and in the words of Ambedkar "it was killed and buried, unwept and unsung, after four clauses were passed."

Ambedkar was disappointed. This was one of the reasons for his resignation from the Nehru Cabinet.

Ambedkar's Resignation

Ambedkar resigned from the Nehru Cabinet on September 27, 1951. He did not submit his speech in writing in Parliament and he walked out. In a Press statement he made clear all his differences with the Cabinet: (1) Nehru kept him out

of every Cabinet Committee; though he had promised him the Planning Department, he offered him the Law Ministry. (2) According to him, Government had exhibited apathy towards the Scheduled Castes. (3) Difference over the Kashmir issue. Ambedkar advocated partition of Kashmir; he said that the Hindu and the Buddhist parts should be given to India and the Muslim part to Pakistan. (4) Ambedkar remarked that the foreign policy of India was incorrect since it had made more enemies rather than friends. Increase in the defence expenditure was the result of foreign policy. (5) Nehru's policy in regard to the Hindu Code Bill.

Nehru said that the statement was not that what he had expected from a resigning Minister.

IX

In The Constituent Assembly of India

THE DEMAND FOR a Constituent Assembly elected by the people of India was affirmed from time to time by political leaders. The failure of the Round Table Conference convinced Indians that the Constitution of India must be framed by Indians through a Sovereign Constituent Assembly. In 1934 the Swarajya Party declared that applying the principle of self-determination it was necessary "to convene a Constituent Assembly, representative of all sections of the Indian people, to frame an acceptable constitution."[1] The Congress at its Faizpur session in December 1936 declared that a genuine democratic State of India, with its political power transferred to the people as a whole, could only come through a Constituent Assembly elected by adult suffrage and invested with the power to frame the Constitution of the country. In November 1939, the Congress Working Committee declared the same policy. Gandhiji also supported the idea of a Constituent Assembly.[2]

The Muslim League after its Lahore Resolution on Pakistan in March 1940, demanded two Constituent Assemblies in accordance with its demand for two separate States in the

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[1] *Indian Annual Register* 1934, p. 279.
[2] *Harijan,* 28-11-1939.

country. The Cripps Proposals and the Sapru Committee also upheld it. But Ambedkar opposed this demand and regarded it as a most dangerous project which might involve this country in a civil war. In his interview with the Cabinet Mission on April 5, 1946, Ambedkar opposed the idea of Constituent Assembly as he feared it would be dominated by the caste Hindus. If Scheduled Castes joined it they would be no more than a small minority which could always be outvoted.

Though Ambedkar and his party opposed the Constituent Assembly and regarded it as dangerous, in the changed circumstances, they thought that there was no other way but to take active part in it. Ambedkar visualised that the Britons were determined to withdraw from India and the ensuing Constituent Assembly would be a sovereign one, that the pattern of future Constitution should suit Indian conditions and the interests of the Depressed Classes were wedded to the general interests of the rest of the population.

Ambedkar was elected to the Constituent Assembly of India by the members of the West Bengal Legislative Assembly, though he was defeated in Bombay. He was elected on the Drafting Committee and later appointed its Chairman. The other members were N. Gopalaswami Ayyangar, Sir Alladi Krishnaswami Ayyar, K. M. Munshi, Sir Muhammad Sadulla, N. Madhav Menon and D. P. Khaitan. B. N. Rau was the constitutional adviser.

Ambedkar was a relentless opponent and an uncompromising critic of the Indian National Congress in its policies towards his community. At the opening session of the Assembly he was one of the very few who opposed the Objectives Resolution moved by Pandit Nehru. But subsequent developments culminating in the partition of the country made him realise that political realism demanded a moderate attitude on his part towards those who had in their hands effective political power. The Congress responded to this gesture so generously that they elected him the Chairman of the Drafting Committee.

His main objective in entering the Constituent Assembly was to safeguard the interests of the Scheduled Castes.[3] He was surprised when he was elected to the Drafting Committee and, moreover, as its Chairman. He realised that 'the course of political events was changed now'[4] He changed his stategy. Instead of opposition, he adopted the policy of cooperation with the Congress leadership.

Ambedkar supported Objectives Resolution moved by Jayakar (December 13, 1946); but he proposed the postponement of it 'with a view to securing the cooperation of the Muslim League and the Indian States.' He maintained that the Resolution was beyond the scope of the Constituent Assembly. He ended his speech by describing it as 'wrong, illegal, premature, disastrous and dangerous.'[5] But he stressed nationalisation of industry and land.[6]

At the outset, he declared that the Constitution emanated from the people. He remarked that Indian sovereignty did not derive from the sovereignty of the British Parliament. The Preamble indicated the source from which our Constitution derived its authority and also stated the objects which the Constitution sought to promote. He defended Indian federalism. According to him, it was not a league of states nor were the states administrative units or agencies of the Union Government. His concept of federalism meant that the state was a federation in normal times but unitary in an emergency. He defended a strong Central Government. Of all the rights, he regarded equality of opportunity for all citizens as the most important right. He emphasised the Article on constitutional remedies, and characterized it as the very soul of the Constitution, and the very heart of it. The Directive Principles were meant to ensure social and economic democracy, in addition to political democracy, which was secured

[3]*C. A. Debates,* Vol. XI, p. 973.
[4]*Ambedkar, Letters to Gaekwad,* p 289.
[5]Munshi, K. M., *op cit.,* p. 115.
[6]*C. A. Debates,* Vol. I, p. 97-98.

by the provision of Fundamental Rights in a written Constitution. According to Ambedkar, they were nothing but obligations imposed by the Constitution upon the various Governments in this country. He first stigmatised the villages as dens of superstition and ignorance but afterwards he embodied in the Directive Principles the salutary provision for village panchayats. He stressed that the Directive Principles were more important and the Fundamental Rights were subservient to the Directive Principles. He preferred to the Cabinet system of Government as prevailing in England. It was preferable in India to the Presidential system of Government as existed in the U.S.A.

The Constitution on the whole incorporated some of the latest features of the working of other Constitutions in the world today : nationalism, centralisation, a strong executive, secularism and a welfare state. It provided not only for a Governmental machinery but also for an effective instrument for orderly social change. It aimed at the blending of political democracy with economic and social democracy. According to Ambedkar, the executive authority should be co-extensive with legislative authority. He added that the principles embodied in this constitution were as good as, if not better than, the principles embodied in any other parliamentary Constitution. He remarked that however good or bad a constitution might be, whether it would turn out good or bad would ultimately depend on the men who worked it. In his speech in the Rajya Sabha, he remarked, "the Constitution was a wonderful temple we built for the Gods, but before they could be installed, the devils have taken possession."

Labour and Constitution

The Central Government would have the authority not merely to make laws but would have the authority to administer them.

A Constitution which is politico-socio-economic, besides prescribing the nature of the various organs of the State, also proceeds to prescribe a particular form of economic organisation for the society. That is to say it prescribes the ownership and

the management of the instruments of production and distribution of the income among members of the society. The U.S.S.R. Constitution broke new ground. It prescribed a political structure for the U.S.S R society; it also prescribed, in its Constitution, the economic structure. Ambedkar remarked that to prescribe the shape of the economic life of society was to take away the liberty of the individual. But again he maintained that safeguarding of individual liberty required that the Constitution should prescribe the economic shape of society.

According to Ambedkar, political democracy rested on four premises : (1) the individual is an end in himself; (2) the individual has certain inalienable rights which must be guaranteed to him by the Constitution, (3) the individual shall not be required to relinquish any of his Constitutional rights as a condition precedent to the receipt of a privilege; (4) the State shall not delegate powers to private persons to govern others The unemployed are compelled to relinquish their fundamental rights for the sake of securing the privilege to work and to subsist. He further remarked that the liberty from the control of the State resulted in dictatorship of the private employer. He said that fulfilment of a fundamental purpose could not be left to the mercies of majority rule. According to him, labour must have liberty and equality and a constitution which balanced both. He preferred to socialism. He remarked that Indian Labour must insist that the Indian Constitution must not merely be political instrument but must also be an economic instrument.

Ambedkar gave due credit to the organised Congress Party. He said, "it is because of the discipline of the Congress Party that the Drafting Committee was able to pilot the Constitution in the Assembly with the sure knowledge as to the fate of each article and each amendment. The Congress Party is entitled to all the credit for the smooth sailing of the Draft Constitution in the Assembly."[7] Shri B. Shiva Rao also remarked that the

[7]*C. A. Debates*, Vol. XI, p. 974.

Congress Party never yielded to temptation of attempting to carry any of its provisions or of imposing any of its ideas through the weight of its party majority. Besides everything, Ambedkar emphasised Constitutional morality.

On the whole, "his speeches were invariably characterised by a bold and forthright approach. On two points—the question of a strong Centre with plenary powers and the amplitude of Fundamental Rights—his unequivocal support was very helpful'.[*]

*Munshi, K. M., *op cit.*, p. 184.

X

Opposition Leader

AMBEDKAR RESIGNED FROM the Cabinet on September 27, 1951. He went out of the Cabinet as a disappointed man.

Negotiations had been going on for electoral alliances between the leaders of the Peasants and Workers Party in Maharashtra and the leaders of the Scheduled Castes Federation (S.C.F.) on the one hand and the socialist leaders and the S.C.F. leaders on the other. Jayaprakash Narayan and Ashok Mehta discussed with Ambedkar the new opposition. In his opinion, Shankarrao More, the leader of the Peasants and Workers Party (P. & W.P.), was communal, and his party was predominantly a Maratha organisation. The P. & W. P. accepted Marxism in its Dabhadi Thesis. Jayaprakash Narayan told Ambedkar that S. S. More was pro-communist and wished to merge his P. & W.P. into the Communist Party of India (C.P.I.). Ambedkar said that if this was to happen then More was ruining the masses. He advised Bhaurao Gaekwad not to give whole-hearted support to the P. & W Party. Still, he asked his followers to expand support to Jedhe, More and Raut (all P. & W. Party Leaders of Maharashtra). Whatever name it had taken, the P. & W. Party, according to him, was a communal party dominated by Marathas. The P. & W. Party announced that the S.C.F. was going to co-operate with the communists. In these circumstances, the possibility of co-operat-

ing with the P. & W. Party vanished for ever. Ambedkar characterised Hindu Mahasabha and Jan Sangh as communal parties.[1]

On the eve of the First General Elections on an adult franchise basis in Free India, the S.C.F. joined hands with the Praja-Socialist Party and made an electoral alliance with it (November 1951). Ambedkar appealed to people to support their candidates. He asked, "why should people think that I should remain an untouchable even in politics ?"

The Scheduled Castes Federation issued its Election Manifesto for the General Elections in 1952. It outlined some principles; Indians are entitled to equality; the S.C.F. would sustain the right of every Indian to freedom—religious, economic and political, State responsibility to make every Indian free from want and free from fear; insistence on the maintenance of liberty, equality and fraternity; redemption from oppression and exploitation of man by man of class by class and of nation by nation and adoption of parliamentary system of Government. The Manifesto advocated partition of Kashmir The Party stood for nationalisation of insurance and abolition of prohibition.

The S.C.F. also outlined some principles of co-operation with other parties : (1) no support to independent candidates; (2) no alliance with any reactionary party such as Hindu Mahasabha or the R.S.S.; (3) working alliances with backward class organisations; (4) no alliance with the C.P.I. (5) no belief in totalitarian parties; (6) no multiplicity of parties. The ideal was two-party democracy.

Nehru in his election speeches denounced the alliance of the socialists with the S.C.F. as unholy and said that it was very surprising and strange that Ambedkar did not oppose his foreign policy in the Cabinet meetings, though he had been a Minister for nearly four years.

Ambedkar was defeated in the election to the Lok Sabha in January 1952. His failure was a significant one. It was due to his advocacy of the partition of Kashmir. His speech before

[1]Ambedkar, *Letters to Gaekwad*, pp. 280-296.

Bombay Muslims on separate electorates for the Muslims, an absence of "positive" speeches before the people and above all the weakness of his disorganised party resulted in his rout. He had no effective alternative programme and he only laid stress on the defects of the Congress Governments.[2]

Ambedkar was elected to the Council of States (Rajya Sabha) at the end of March 1952. In May 1954, he tried again to get elected to the Lok Sabha in a by-election but he was defeated. He realised that a party, which had no support in the rural areas, had no future.[3]

Ambedkar was a member of the Bombay Legislative Council from 1937 to the date of his accepting membership of the Viceroy's Executive Council B. G. Kher, the Chief Minister of Bombay, paid tribute to Ambedkar as a leader from the opposition who had made helpful constructive criticism and suggestions and had pointed out defects.

After his resignation from the Cabinet in August 1951, he again accepted the role of opposition leader. His speech in connection with the Amendment of Article 19(2) was praised as under : "His peroration for its incisiveness and lucidiay of exposition concerning difficult constitutional and legal issues must rank as one of the most outstanding debating performances ever witnessed in this parliament.[4]

On the whole, his powers of putting across the oppositions view was not that effective and they had not the same sharpness as they had in an earlier period.

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[2]Keer, *op cit.*, p. 437.
[3]*Ibid*, p. 450.
[4]*The Times of India*, 19-5-1951.

XI

Conversion to Buddhism

Conception of Religion

AMBEDKAR CONSIDERED THE foundations of religion to be essential to life and practices of society. According to him, religion was a part of one's "social inheritance". He wanted religion, but he did not want hypocrisy in the name of religion. Religion, to him, was the driving force for human activity. He remarked, "Man cannot live by bread alone. He had a mind which need food for the thought."[1] He considered the foundation of religion to be essential to life and practices of society.

According to Ambedkar, religion must be judged by social standards, based on social ethics.[2] He linked religion with the social being of the people. He remarked, "The religion which discriminates between two followers is partial and the religion which treats crores of its adherents worse than dogs and criminals and inflicts upon them insufferable disabilities is no religion at all."[3] He wanted to have a religion in the sense of 'spiritual principles' truly 'universal' applicable to all times to all countries and to all races.[4] He treated Hinduism as "a mass

[1]Keer, *op cit.*, p. 462.
[2]Ambedkar, *Annihilation of Caste*, p., 25.
[3]Keer, *op cit.*, p. 92.
[4]Ambedkar, *op cit.*, p. 71.

of sacrificial, societal, political and sanitary rules and regulations; all mixed up."[5]

Ambedkar has given four characteristics of religion (1) Religion in the sense of morality, must, therefore, remain the governing principle in every society. (2) Religion, if it is to function, must be in accord with reason which is merely another name for science. (3) Its moral code must recognise the fundamental tenets of liberty, equality and fraternity. Unless a religion recognises these three fundamental principles of social life, religion will be doomed. (4) Religion must not sanctify or ennoble poverty.[6] According to him, "What is called religion by Hindus is nothing but a multitude of commands and prohibitions."[7] He has enumerated the evils of Hindu religion as follows : (1) It has deprived moral life of freedom; (2) It has only conformity to commands; (3) The laws are inequitous in that they are not the same for one class as for another. This code had the finality. He concluded that this religion must be destroyed and there was nothing irreligious in working for the destruction of such a religion.[8]

Ambedkar wanted a change from a 'religion of rules' to 'a religion of principles', a change required before it could be a 'true religion'. Among his requirements were "(1) one standard book of Hindu religion; (2) no hereditary priesthood, but an examination system open to all; (3) state *sanads* (permits) required for priests; (4) a limit by law on the number of priests; (5) state supervision of the priests' morals, beliefs and worship."[9]

Conversion Process

Ambedkar's journey to Buddhism can be traced during a

[5] *Ibid*, p. 73.
[6] *Buddha and the Future of Religion*, paras 17-20.
[7] Ambedkar, *op cit.*, p. 72.
[8] *Ibid*, pp. 73-74.
[9] Ambedkar, *op cit.*, pp. 74-75.

span of about forty years. At the age of sixteen Keluskar gave him a copy of the life of Gautam Buddha. In the 30 years upto 1945 he had bitter experiences of caste Hindus, and he tried his utmost to have separate electorates—an attempt to isolate Scheduled Castes completely from Hindus. In 1945 he attended a Buddhist conference On 20th June 1946, on behalf of People's Education Society, he started one college and named it *Siddharth College*. In 1948, he wrote a foreword to—L. Narasu's book, 'The Essence of Buddhism'. In 1950, he took part in the first Modern Buddhist procession in Delhi. In December 1954, he took part in the Third World Federation of Buddhists It is said that there he made up his mind to embrace Buddhism. Ambedkar was inclined towards Buddhism openly from May 1950. On May 24, 1956 he declared on the day of Buddha Jayanti celebrations at Nare Park in Bombay that he would embrace Buddhism in October, 1956. On September 23, 1956, he issued a press note announcing that his conversion to Buddhism would take place at Nagpur on the Dassara day, October 14, 1956 between 9 and 11 a.m. He himself preferred to Nagpur which was a historic town where the Buddhist Nagas flourished in ancient times. D.C. Ahir claimed that due to Ambedkar's influence as the architect of India's Constitution the *Asoka Chakra* (the wheel of law) was put on the flag of India, and the Lions from the Ashokan pillar at Sarnath were adopted as the National Emblem.[10]

A question was raised by many critics when Ambedkar resolved to renounce Hinduism, why had he waited for a long period of twenty years? It is said that he deliberately waited upto the 2500th birthday of Buddha. B. S. Murthy answered this question. He remarked, "The only answer seems to be that he dearly loved all that was best in Hinduism."[11]

The insulting treatment at the hands of the Hindus; the

[10] D. C. Ahir, *Buddhism and Ambedkar*, p. 185.

[11] B. S. Murthy, *Depressed and Oppressed*, p. 185.

denial of Sanskrit and Vedic learning, his experiences in Baroda and in the Bombay Bar—all these convinced him that the untouchables would never receive just treatment in Hindu Dharma and Hindu Society He was sure that individual and group mobility were difficult within the Hindu Social system for the untouchables. He was aware that compassion, equality and freedom were not to be found in Hindu religion. He rejected renunciation. He was attracted towards Buddhism because of its moral basis of equality, justice and wide basis of humanitarianism

Srinivasan, Jagjivan Ram and M. C. Rajah rejected the idea of conversion.

In the All Bombay District Mahar Conference, May 30-31, 1936, Ambedkar characterised the problem of untouchability as a problem of class strife. It was a strife between two societies; the caste Hindus and the untouchables. He thought that to remain in Hinduism and attempt to abolish caste system was like sweetening poison. For this he emphasised to look for power from some source outside the Hindu fold.

Dhamma as Religion

Ambedkar regarded *Dhamma* as religion. He observed, "Religion is personal, contrary to this, *Dhamma* is social." He described *Dhamma* as righteousness, right relations between man and man in all spheres of life. The Buddhist way of life aimed at the moral regeneration and social emancipation of all human beings. According to him, there were only four preceptors—Shri Krishna, Buddha, Christ and Mohammed. Buddha appealed to him most as he always preached that his disciples should not obey his commands but should follow the dictates of their conscience. There is no god in Buddhism, but the place of god is taken by morality.

The merits of Budhist philosophy are given as follows :—
(a) Buddhism demands living existence and a life divine attainable here and now—and not after death. (b) It is a realism—

never an idealism. (c) It upholds liberty, equality, truth and justice—it pours on humanity love and peace. (d) It is dynamic, scientific and all embracing. (e) Its explanation of life and its meaning and purpose of birth and its nature, of death and its aftermath is very clear, intelligible and logical. (f) Above all, man is the centre of its study and examination, not anything outside him. On the contrary, the static nature of Hindu Dharma and society was emphasized as below : (a) Hindu Society is as it was in B.C. with trivial modifications. (b) Untouchability is recognised by the Hindu religion; it is deeply rooted in Hindu Society. (c) Caste is the corner-stone to the arch of Hinduism.[12]

According to Ambedkar, Hinduism and Buddhism differed in three vital aspects. In Hindu religion, there is *Ishwar* (God), *Atma* (soul), and *Varna* system; in Buddhism, there is no *Ishwar,* soul and caste or *Varna* system.

Ambedkar was always of the view that social and human reconstruction needed a religious basis.[13] In a speech on the British Broadcasting Corporation he outlined his preference of Buddhism to Hinduism. He preferred to Buddhism because it gave three principles in combination which no other religion gave. Buddhism teaches *Prajna* (understanding against superstition and supernaturalism), *Karuna* (love), and *Samata* (equality). He preferred to Buddhism because like Christianity it affords hope to the down-trodden.[14]

According to him, Buddhism was a true religion because it led to a life guided by the three principles of knowledge, right path and compassion He remarked, "Buddhism is a part and parcel of Bharatiya Culture. I have taken care that my conversion will not harm the tradition of the culture and history of this land."[15] He said in an interview on 13th October 1956

[12]Deva and Wagh, *Dr. Ambedkar's Conversion,* pp. 4-5.

[13]*Ibid,* pp. 19-24.

[14]*Ambedkar's Speeches,* Vol. II, p. 115.

[15]Keer, *op cit*, p. 495.

at Nagpur that he would not remain a member of the S.C.F. after conversion to Buddhism. There were two mottos before him— ''बुद्धं सरणम् गच्छामि'' means 'I am surrendering myself to the person possessed of knowledge'; and the other is ''संघ सरणम् गच्छामि''— 'I am surrendering myself to Sanghs—Guilds. Sangh means social life; to him Buddha was a great socialist of his times. He was a rationalist and he rooted out the monopoly of Brahmins.[16]

After his conversion to Buddhism on October 14, 1956, Ambedkar said that, by discarding ancient religion which stood for inequality and oppression to-day he was reborn and felt as it liberated from hell.[17] He was deeply moved when he said, "I renounce Hinduism". He reminded of his followers of his vow taken in 1935 that 'even though I am born a Hindu I will not die a Hindu'. He fulfilled his vow. He had the satisfaction of having accomplished a great deed in establishing the revival of Buddhism in India

Buddha versus Marx

In a meeting which accorded reception in the honour of Indo-Japanese Cultural Association, Ambedkar said that the present generation or future generations would have ultimately to choose between the gospel of Buddha and the gospel of Karl Marx. He added that if Buddhist gospel was not adopted, the history of conflict in Europe would be repeated in Asia.

Buddha said, "There is *Dukkha* (sorrow) in the world." He did not use the word 'exploitation'; but he did lay the foundation of his religion on what he called '*Dukkha*'. The word '*Dukkha*' has been used by Buddha in the sense of property. Buddha said that no monk should have private property. Marx said that in order to prevent exploitation, the state must own the instruments of production.

[16] *Mahanirvan* special number p. 17.

[17] *Letters to Gaekwad*, p. 340.

While talking on the British Broadcasting Corporation London, in May 1956, Ambedkar said, "Buddhism gives three principles in combination which no other religion does. It teaches *Prajna* (understanding) as against superstition; *Karuna* (love) and *Samata* (Equality). He claimed that Buddhism was a complete answer to Karl Marx. According to him, the Buddhist way to abolish sorrow was safe and it was the only way to save itself from Marxism.[18] He said that to spread Buddhism was to serve mankind.

Ambedkar delivered a speech at the 4th Conference of the World Fellowship of Buddhists at Khatmandu on November 20, 1956. It was presided by King Mahendra of Nepal. He emphasised that Buddhism could survive only when it could be a substitute for Communism. He said that communist system is based on force; on the other hand in Buddhism he found a democratic system According to him, Buddha's way was safest and soundest. He remarked that 90 per cent of Christianity is copied from Buddhism both in substance and in form. At the end of his speech he warned not to be allured by Communist successes.

Ambedkar was conscious that the major task is to alter the social structure. He said, "if the social structure were not altered, the present system was likely to collapse pretty soon" and added that "the alternative, if democracy did not work in India, das something of communism"[19]

Criticism

The religious conversion brought out by Ambedkar on a mass scale was an unprecedented event in the history of India. He visualised that religious conversion was essential to rouse the rational conciousness of man against religious hypocrisy and dishonesty. It was a revolt against the suppression and enslavement of humanity. It was mobilised and culminated in the Buddhist movement. It was a liberating force.

[18]*Ibid*, pp. 276-277.

[19]*Illustrated Weekly of India*, 12-7-1953.

Ambedkar's conversion movement has not yet completed two decades. Its appreciation and evaluation is and will be echoed and reechoed in the social atmosphere of India.

One important point was that the Buddhist conversion has released him from his place in the Hindu hierarchy, and from his point of view, given him a new identity although it has not won this admission from the caste Hindus S Kharat remarked 'the aim of conversion is not economic but psychological' The untouchables began to think that they had a separate identity. Faith in Ambedkar and spontaneity were the two factors that contributed to the growth of the conversion movement. According to Nehru, 'Buddha functioned to some extent as a social revolutionary'[20] This appealed to the untouchables most

According to Issacs, 'Ambedkar's choice of Buddhism was, in essence, a compromise with his sense of nationality'. He used to say 'I belong to this nation India I am an Indian".[21] He thought that Buddhism was indigeneous. He had full faith in the integrity and oneness of India. He said that by conversion he has taken care not to bring any harm to the Indian culture and Indian historical traditions. Buddhism is purely Indian and Gautam Buddha is upholder of liberty not only of India but of the whole world. Hindus also shared in common the cultural heritage of Buddhism.[22]

The posing of the question that Buddha can be an alternative to Marx is out of question; because those two seers have outlined their philosophy in different times. Marxism bases its theories on the materialist conception of the world, and from this stand—point, it examines the world. Marxist view is essentially scientific drawn from reality. Marx puts forth the rules of social transformation; and he emphasised materialist conception of history. The question of violence or non-violence is irrelevant. Marx

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[20] J. L. Nehru, *Discovery of India*, p. 1966.

[21] Issacs, *India's Ex-untouchables*, p. 182

[22] *Navayug*, 13-4-1947.

insisted on the transformation of society, but did not insist on violence.

Ambedkar attacked Marxism and emphasised Buddhism; but his humanistic approach towards the problem of conversion invalidated by his wrong approach towards Marxism. To facilitate conversion to Buddhism he invented his theory that untouchables were once Buddhists. His conversion went counter to his previous thought that the problem of untouchables was the problem of class war. He did not explain how conversion would bestow upon untouchables the freedom from social bondage, economic advancement and progress. This is regarded as a reactionary step; because his approach to Marxism was wrong. His solution of the problem seemed like a man who first wrote the answer and to justify it outlined the theory afterwards.

Zeliot has put the problem bluntly. She 'emphasised the point that Ambedkar's embracing of a new religion, was meant to act as a bulwark against communism.'[28]

Two prime motives can be traced behind his conversion. One was rejection of the Hindu Social System and the other was a belief in a religious way of life. He felt that religion alone can establish equality among human being and that *Dharma* is important for man and humanity. 'He felt that Buddhist *Dhamma* was more democratic, ethical and egalitarian according to him and hence the inevitable choice'.[24] He preferred to use the medium of religion to break away from caste structure; but he avoided class struggle.

Ambedkar tried to emphasise *Dhamma* as religion. He wrote a book 'Buddha and His *Dhamma*'. This book was criticised bitterly. "Ambedkar's Buddhism is based on hatred; Buddha's on compassion. He preached non-*Dhamma* for motives of social reform".[25] Then again *the Light of Dhamma* commented :

[23]S. Patwardhan, *Change among India's Harijans*, p. 135.

[24]*Ibid* 135.

[25]*Buddhist Journal of India*, Dec. 1959.

"Whenever he found views in Buddhism inconvenient to his own, he denounced them as later accretions made by monks." Dr. Rhys Davids in his book 'Buddhism' remarked, "Gautam was brought up as a Hindu and lived and died a Hindu His teaching was Indian throughout. He was the greatest and wisest and best of the Hindus."[26]

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[26]*Rhys Davids, 'Buddhism'*, pp. 116-117.

XII

Journey's End

ON OCTOBER 15, the Nagpur Municipal Corporation presented Ambedkar with an address of welcome. He was described as "a social reformer, philosopher, and erudite constitutionalist". On October 16, he attended a mass conversion ceremony at Chanda.

Then Ambedkar went to Khatmandu to attend the World Buddhist Conference. It was to be inaugurated on November 15th, 1956 by King Mahendra of Nepal. Speaking on the occasion he declared that Buddhism was not merely a religion, but a great social doctrine. He delivered a lecture on "Buddha and Marx". He said that Buddha would not stand in the path of abolition of private property, if the principle of the denial of private property was applied to society. Marxist and Buddhist methods differed. According to him, Buddhist method was the safest and soundest.

He returned to Delhi, and attended a function in honour of the Dalai Lama. On December 4, he was present in the Council of States. He wrote two letters to P. K. Atre and S. M. Joshi in joining to his proposed Republican Party of India.

On the 6th December, Mrs. Ambedkar got up as usual, but she found Dr. Ambedkar no more. He passed away in sleep. It was the result of severe diabetic neurosis.

Pandit Nehru, G. B. Pant, Jagjivan Ram and others came immediately to Ambedkar's residence and made arrangements to transport the body to Bombay.

The Secretaries of Lok Sabha and Rajya Sabha garlanded him, several members of Parliament, leading lawyers and eminent scholars paid their homage.

The body was received at the Santa Cruz Airport at 3. a.m. by thousands of people. The body was taken to Rajgriha, his residence in Bombay. Lakhs of people gathered to have a last glimpse of the departed leader. There was a spontaneous *hartal* and processions were held in many cities like Bombay. The procession in Bombay reached Dadar Hindu Crematorium after four hours. More than a million people witnessed the last rites performed by Buddhist priests. Over a lakh people embraced Buddhism at the Crematorium.

Bhikku Anand Kausalyayan, Bhikkus from Malaya and Ceylon paid their homage. P. K. Atre speaking on the occasion said that Ambedkar fought injustice, oppression, and inequality; and he did not revolt against Hinduism but tried to reform it.

Pandit Nehru said in Lok Sabha that he would be remembered mostly as the 'symbol of revolt' against all the oppressing features of the Hindu Society. V. D. Savarkar, Dr. Rajendra Prasad, President of the Indian Republic, C. Rajagopalachari paid high tributes to Ambedkar. Leading Journals praised his erudition, his immense work for the uplift of untouchables. The *Times,* London said that his name would figure prominently in any history of the socio-political evolution of India in the closing years of the British rule. U Nu, the Burmese Premier; remarked that he was one of those who helped to accelerate the process of social change in the country.

Ambedkar's followers held a meeting in Delhi and requested the Government of India to make full investigation into his death. His son had also lodged a complaint with the police in Delhi. On November 26, 1957, Pandit Pant informed the Lok Sabha that Ambedkar died a natural death.

XIII

Facets of his Life

IN THE SPAN of about four decades Ambedkar went through various phases. He led the struggles of untouchables for securing them human rights of drinking water from public tanks; for separate electorates to the depressed classes. He organised first Independent Labour Party (ILP) and later the Scheduled Castes Federation (SCF). He became the Labour Member in the Viceroy's Executive Council in 1942; and later became the Law Member of the first cabinet of the Independent India. He was the Chairman of the Drafting Committee of the Constituent Assembly of India and became known as the 'Architect of the Constitution'. In the last phase he renounced Hinduism and embraced Buddhism. He subordinated his movement for social emancipation to religious reform movements.

When he saw that political freedom was in offing he laid emphasis on adult franchise. Religious awakening and social reform became the touch-stones of his whole thinking process. He urged the collective aspects of human life. He thought that the balance between material and spiritual awakening must be struck; as without it a developing society could not flourish.

Ambedkar was a versatile person. Here is a brief appreciation of the various facets of his life.

Erudite Personality

Ambedkar's thirst for knowledge, his passion for books and

his erudition were unique. He distinguished himself in History, Economic, Politics, Law and Constitution. In these subjects he acquired highest degrees of three world-famous English and American Universities. Throughout his life, this sacrifice for knowledge was going on in an ever-increasing degree. He was an voracious reader and knew seven languages.

He built his bungalow 'Rajgriha' (Buddha's palace) to suit the requirements of a good library. He stayed, took his meals and even slept in that library His library contained upto-date books on various topics. There was one separate division of political biographies. Books were his greatest friends. He said, "For a man like me who was socially boycotted, these books took me to their hearts."[1] He described his love of books as the love of a lover for his beloved. D. E. Vaccha remarked, "Ambedkar was unquestionably a very learned man of varied and versatile scholarship. "[2] Osmania University conferred, the LL.D. degree on him in 1953. In the citation he was described as 'a person of great eminence, high attainment and distinguished service, one of the ablest lawyers, prominent legislator, a champion of the backward and down-trodden people of India". His book on 'Pakistan' attracted attention of many thinkers and politicians In that book he first clearly put forth the difference between the community and the nation. Jinnah read that book and he, in a letter to Gandhiji (17 September 1944) recommended him to read it. Gandhiji admitted that 'it is ably written' but said that 'it carried no conviction to him.'[3] Many people differed from his views and conclusions, "but nobody can deny the candour and competence with which he has discussed this difficult and intriguing topic "[4]

Ambedkar's original aspiration was to become a professor

[1] *Jayanti*, special number, p. 24.

[2] B. E. Vaccha, *op cit.*, p. 187

[3] Hingorani, A. T *To The Protagonists of Pakistan* pp. 120-123.

[4] *The Times of India*, 19-8-1945.

and lead a life of a student; but he was thrown into the vortex of politics. (Here we have to remember Lokmanya Tilak). He was a Professor of Economics in Sydenham College, Bombay. On 1st June, 1935, he became the Principal of the Government Law College, Bombay and he occupied that position till his resignation in 1938. His lectures were illuminating though sometimes students differed from him ideologically. He outlined his concepts about an ideal professor. He said, "He should not only be learned; he must speak in a clear tone. He must be well-versed. My inherent qualities were developed by men like Professor Seligman and others."[5]

Columbia University at its special Convocation on 15th June, 1952 conferred the degree LL.D. (*Honoris Causa*) on him. The citation said, "The degree is being conferred in recognition of the work done by him in connection with the drafting of India's Constitution". Columbia University hailed him as "one of India's leading citizens, a great social reformer and a valiant upholder of human rights."[6]

Ambedkar practised in the Bombay High Court. He being a Mahar (an untouchable) by caste, the other caste-Hindu barristers would not even take tea at his table. In the initial stage he had not even five hundred rupees to obtain his *Sanad* to practise in the High Court.[7] He was very liberal in his treatment of his clients. He had on his shelf Law Reports and Judicial Decisions from High Courts of every country. "At one stage because of his education and status in public life, there was a possibility of his being appointed a judge of the High Court."[8]

Educationist

Almost all leading nationalists, social reformers and theoreti-

[5]*Navayug*, special number, April, 1947.

[6]Jeanette Robbin, *Dr. Ambedkar and His Movement*, p. 131.

[7]Ambedkar's *Letters to Gaekwad*, p. 38.

[8]D. E. Vaccha, *op cit*, p. 187.

cians of modern India have contributed much to enrich the treasure of education. To name a few; Tilak, Gokhale, Lajpat Rai, Ashutosh Mukherjee, and Shyama Prasad Mukherjee Ambedkar's name can be included in this illustrious list. He founded the People's Education Society, and started Colleges at Bombay and Aurangabad. He held that greater responsibility for providing opportunities should be that of government. He did not think that boys and girls should be given the same education. He asked : What was the use of teaching Burke and Shakespeare to girls? Girls must be well-versed in home-education.[9] In his speech in D. C. Women's Conference, in July 1942 in Nagpur under the presidentship of Mrs. Sulochanabai Dongare of Amraoti, he said that he measured the progress of a community by the degree of progress which women had achieved. He asked them to be clean, to educate their children and to remove inferiority complex. He regarded having too many children as a crime.

Cabinet Member

Ambedkar commanded authority and respect. The aura of office was backed by fine intellect, vast erudition, and gift for a debate. He had the rare ability to reduce the most complex questions to simple terms. He was a man of strong likes and dislikes. He sometimes indulged in sweeping judgments of men and affairs. Yet his mind was basically logical with will-power of penetrating analysis and a gift of clever thinking. Though he differed from Congress, he joined the Nehru Cabinet as a Law Member, piloted the Constitution through the Constituent Assembly; but when he differed from his colleagues, he resigned.

Champion of Human Rights

Ambedkar conceived the State as an organisation, the aim of which was "(1) to maintain the right of every subject to life,

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[9] *Bombay University Ambedkar Collections,* ILP Manifesto.

liberty and pursuit of happiness and to free speech and free exercise of religion, (2) to remove social, political and economic inequality by providing better opportunities to the submerged classes, and (3) to make it possible for every subject to enjoy freedom from want and freedom from fear."[10] He stood for people's local freedom and rights in post-independence India. He attached more importance to the eternal struggle of man for freedom. To him, the true freedom of man was not merely political. It was also social, economic, intellectual and spiritual.

Ambedkar endeavoured to reach some balance between the central authority of the state and the liberty of the individual, though individual freedom should not be taken as to affect adversely the best interests of society and state for class benefit. To him, the state was only a means for the furtherance of human ends. He combined individual respect with faith in state organisation. According to him, a good state was that which guaranteed protection against persecution of one community by another and also against internal disturbances, violence and disorder in any part of its territory.[11]

Being himself a lawyer by profession and a jurist by temperament, he emphasised the role of law in civilized society. To him, law was an important factor in maintaining social peace and justice among different groups of people. It was a guardian of equality and liberty. To him, law does not only carry out a legal function. It also regulated the life of the whole society and nation as well. It kept within limits all men irrespective of caste, colour and creed. According to him, laws are made by man for man. Law has not created man, but man has created law for his own happiness[12] Law might require amendments, and these amendments should be done with the consent of all men He emphasised that law must be social and

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[10]Ambedkar, *States and Minorities*, p. 3.

[11]*Ibid*, pp. 108-111.

[12]Ambedkar, *Annihilation of Caste* pp. 77-86.

human *i.e.* universal in its effect.[13] In his conception of law, it was implied that law should be enforced not only by punishment, but also by education—by an appeal of the mind of man and the spirit of society. According to him, certain political rights alone did not constitute the basis of democracy. Sociability and morality were the important elements of his concept of democracy. The fundamental elements of his concept of democracy were . liberty, equality, fraternity, reason, human experience, the rule of law, natural rights and an emphasis on the individual in social relationships. His faith in individual liberty and dignity led him to the rule of law.[14]

Ambedkar regarded rights as 'natural' and 'inherent' in the individual, *i.e.* the individual has certain inalienable rights. He built his theory of social and political organisation around his central concept of the individual and his rights To him, the state existed only to prevent injustice, tyranny and oppression "Rights are protected not by law but by the social and moral conscience of society. If social conscience is such that it is prepared to recognise the rights which law chooses to enact, rights will be safe and secure. But if the fundamental rights are opposed by the community, no law, no parliament, no judiciary can guarantee them in the real sense of the word."[15] He tried to seek harmony between the people and the legal power of the state.

Economist

Ambedkar was a keen student of Economics. He got his M.A. for his thesis on 'Ancient Indian Commerce' and M Sc. (London) for his thesis on 'The Evolution of Provincial Finance in British India' and D.Sc. for his thesis on 'The Problem of the Rupee'. His evidence before the Hilton-Young Commission was his important contribution to the discussion of currency problems in India. He has given expression to his thoughts on the current

[13] *Ibid*, p. 32.
[14] *Ibid*, p. 32.
[15] Ambedkar, *Ranade, Gandhi and Jinnah*, pp. 34-35.

Indian problems such as : landless labourers, small holdings, khoti system, mahar *watan,* collective farming, land revenue, and abolition of landlordism. It covered nearly four important decades : 1917 to 1956. All major political and economic events have been touched by him.

But besides the two notable books—'The Evolution of Provincial Finance in British India' and 'The Problem of the Rupee', he has evolved his economic thinking and it revealed in the Manifestoes of the Independent Labour Party and the Scheduled Castes Federation, and in his speeches on the Constitution of India and budgets.

On many occasions, Ambedkar has expressed his views on land reform, mode of farming and industrialization. The untouchable classes are predominantly landless, or small peasant cultivators. His motive was to lift these classes. He realised that the solution of the problem of the untouchable landless labourers was dependent upon the solution of the Indian agricultural problem or more broadly the Indian Economic Problem. The strategy of the untouchables had to be fitted in a broader national strategy for a broader economic development.

Ambedkar pointed out the lack of justice in basing the assessment of the land revenue on the income. He advocated that land revenue must be brought under the income-tax provisions. The Taxation Enquiry Commission (Chairman : Dr. John Matthai) had also later advocated the same view. His insistence on the abolition of landlordism, khoti and mahar *watan* was noteworthy. He regarded it an economic struggle or rather a form of struggle, of oppressed classes against the exploiter classes.

Ambedkar has discussed the currency problems in his book, 'The Problem of the Rupee'. It was an instructive treatise on a controversial subject. According to him, closing of the Mints would prevent inflation and disturbances in the internal price-level. He advocated that the standard of value should be gold and the elasticity of the currency should come from this source.

He emphasised that with a gold basis both expansion and contraction should be easy. He had shown great scholarship and tremendous amount of hard work in this book. It surpassed all other treatises on the Rupee. The following are some press opinions. :

The Times (London) : "Excellent piece of work. English style is easy; and his knowledge of his subject obviously very full."

Economist (London) : "It is a clear and ably written book. Certainly none of the other numerous works or one or the other aspect of the monetary problem have anything like the readability of this tract. . It is a clear and ably written work "

Scotsman : "...His work throughous shows the utmost care and is clearly the fruit of painstaking research ..The book is, on account of the originality of its treatment, to be commended to all students of the finances of India."

Financier, "Ambedkar deals with the problem in a very lucid and praiseworthy manner and puts forward not merely its origin but also valuable proposals for a solution, which should be studied by bankers and those merchants whose business depends upon the exchange."[16]

The noted economist Professor Edwin Cannan, Ambedkar's guide, had written the Foreword to the above book Professor Cannan disagreed with some of his criticism but he said, "even when I have thought him quite wrong, I have found a stimulating freshness in his views and reasons. Writers on Indian currency problems have referred to this book and even included extracts in their text books". Dr. Ambedkar advocated the gold currency standard and favoured an inconvertible rupee with a fixed limit of issue. His exposition throughout is clear; his arguments sound and convincing.[17]

Ambedkar's views on "The Evolution of Provincial Finance in British India" comprised his study in the Provincial

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[16]*Bombay University Ambedkar Collections.*

[17]*The Times of India,* 11-2-48.

Decentralization of Imperial Finance. Professor R. A. Seligman, said in the Preface : "The value of Ambedkar's contribution to this discussion lies in the objective recitation of the facts and the impartial analysis of the interesting development that has taken place in his country. Nowhere to my knowledge has such a detailed study of the underlying principles been made".

According to Ambedkar, the fundamental cause of India's backward economy was the delay in changing the land system The real remedy was democratic collectivism in which economic efficiency, productivity and overhauling village economy are materialized. It aimed to wipe out completely elements of economic exploitation and social injustice. He wanted that there should be no landlord, no tenant, and no landless labourer. He wanted both freedom and welfare, which were possible in his idea of economic realism. He realised that no proper place was given to landless labourers in cooperative farming.

His idea of nationalization of agriculture was opposed by reactionary forces. The essential feature of his approach to economic problems was his condemnation of extreme views like *laissez-faire* and scientific socialism. Therefore mixed economy was the corner-stone of his economic ideas. He stood for the progressive transformation of society, removing glaring social and economic inequalities that were due to the capitalist system. His advocacy of state socialism and parliamentary democracy as a means to establish socialism deserve careful attention.

Ambedkar supported the progressive steps of socialism. He thought that its practical application would facilitate the solution of the problem of the underprivileged. His standing as an economist was a reflection of Ambedkar as a politician-statesman. He wrote on economic matters when it became expedient in the field of politics. The dominance of political activities overshadowed his study of economics and it will not be out of place here if we say that we have suffered a great loss in losing in him an economist of no mean ability.[18]

[18]W N. Kuber, *Ambedkar; A Critical Study*, p. 286.

Sociologist

Ambedkar besides writing on economic and political topics has also contributed much to the discussion of the social problems. His first writing on caste system appeared in a paper he read before the Anthropology Seminar (9th May 1910) of Dr. A. A Goldenweiser, Columbia University, New York. He wrote on 'Castes in India . Their Mechanism, Genesis and Development' published in *Indain Antiquary* (Vol ILVI, 1917, pp. 81—95). He wrote two books about 'Shudras and Untouchables'. Besides these books, he wrote one booklet, 'Annihilation of Caste, with a reply to Mahatma Gandhi' (undelivered address before the Annual Conference of Jat-Pat-Todak Mandal, Lahore, 1936).

Ambedkar summarised his theory about the *Shudras* in the following terms :—(1) The Shudras were one of the Aryan communities of the solar race. (2) They ranked as the *Kshatriya Varna* in the Indo-Aryan Society. (3) There was a time when Indo-Aryan Society recognised only three *Varnas*. The Shudras were not a separate *varna* but a part of the *Kshatriya Varna* (4) There was a continuous feud between the *Shudra* kings and the Brahmins, in which the Brahmins were subjected to many tyrannies and indignities (5) As a result of the hatred towards the *Shudras* due to their tyrannies and oppressions, the Brahmins refused to invest the *Shudras* with the sacred thread. (6) Owing to the loss of the sacred thread, the *Shudras* became socially degraded, fell below the rank of the '*Vaishyas*' and came to form the fourth varna.[19] About the origin of untouchability he concluded that while untouchability did not exist in 200 A.D. it had emerged by 600 A.D. Cow-killing was made a capital offence by the Gupta Kings, sometime in the 4th Century A.D. Therefore, he concluded that untouchability must have arisen about 400 A.D It is born out of the struggle between Buddhism and Brahminism.[20]

[19]Ambedkar, *Who were The Shudras ?*, p. 239.
[20]Ambedkar, *Untouchables—Who Are They ?*, p. 155.

The major theoretical exposition of caste system by Ambedkar was his presidential speech supposed to be delivered at the *Jat-Pat Todak Mandal,* Lahore, at the end of March 1936. The Conference was postponed upto the middle of May, due to very bitter criticism for having elected its President, a leader like Ambedkar 'who was a declared hater of Hindu Religion.' The result was that even the staunch leaders like Bhai Paramanand, Dr. Narang, Mahatma Hans Raj, and Raja Narendra Nath had to dissociate themselves from the Mandal. Ambedkar participated in the Sikh Conference at Amritsar on 13th and 14th April, 1936. This participation worsened the suspicion of the Mandal. In the proposed address, he had stated that it was his last speech as a Hindu. The Mandal refused to accept such a President. This was the first time when the appointment of a President was cancelled by the Reception Committee because it did not approve of the views of the President. Gandhiji also commented on the above and said, "Dr. Ambedkar is not the man, to allow himself to be forgotten."[21]

According to Ambedkar, castes are autonomous and there is no authority anywhere to compel a caste to admit a new-comer to its social life. In Hindu society there is no place for a convert. Hindu religion ceased to be a missionary religion when the caste system grew up among the Hindus. Caste in the hands of the orthodox has been a powerful weapon for persecuting the reformers. To him, virtue, charity have become caste-ridden, and morality has become caste-bound. His ideal society was based on Liberty, Equality and Fraternity—another name for democracy. To him, *Chaturvarnya* could not be an ideal; it was a vicious system. He said, "There cannot be a more degrading system of social organisation than *Chaturvarnya.* It is the system which deadens, paralyses and cripples the people from helpful activity."[22] To him, "inter-caste dinners are an inadequate

[21]*Harijan,* 11-7-1936.
[22]Ambedkar, *Annihilation of Caste,* p. 49.

remedy. The real remedy is inter-caste marriage."[23] He remarked that the divinity behind the castes *i e.* behind the *Shastras* should be destroyed [24]

In reply to the presidential address of Dr. Ambedkar, Gandhiji wrote three articles in his Harijan. He remarked : 'Dr. Ambedkar is a challenge to Hinduism.'[25] He said further, "Religion does not live by learning. It lives in the experiences of saints and seers in their lives and sayings. Caste has nothing to do with religion. . .In his able address, the Doctor has overproved his case."[26] Gandhiji said that the *shastras* should be interpreted not by the learned scholars, but by the saints. Ambedkar objected to it by saying that none of the saints ever attacked the caste system; on the contrary, they were staunch believers in the caste system. In this context Ambedkar referred *Dnyandeo* and *Eknath.* He remarked that the saints have never carried on a campaign against the caste and untouchability. They were not concerned with the struggle between man and man. They were concerned with relation between man and God. He made it clear that the pious lives and noble sermons of the saints have had no effect on their life and conduct as against the teachings of *shastras.*[27]

In his analysis of social problems, Ambedkar characterised caste system as irrational and tyrannical; but above all he attained Brahminism. He enumerated the principles of Brahminism as follows :— (1) graded inequality between the different classes; (2) complete disarmament of the *Shudras* and the untouchables; (3) complete prohibition of the education of the *Shudras* and the untouchables; (4) ban on the *Shudras* and the untouchables occupying places of power and authority; (5) ban on the *Shudras* and the untouchables for acquiring property; and (6) complete

[23] *Ibid,* p. 57.
[24] *Ibid,* pp. 61-70.
[25] *Harijan,* 11-7-1936.
[26] *Harijan,* 18-7-1936.
[27] Ambedkar—A *Reply to Mahatma,* p. 14.

subjugation and suppression of women. According to him, inequality in all respects was the official doctrine of Brahminism. He remarked that no intellectual class has prostituted its intelligence to invent a philosophy to keep its uneducated countrymen in a perpetual state of ignorance and poverty as the Brahmins have done in India.[28]

Ambedkar remarked that Hindu scriptures were almost entirely the creation of the Brahmins, whose sole object was to sustain their superiority and privileges. He expressed his firm opinion that these *shastras* must be proscribed.[29] As regards the Puranas and *shastras*, he deemed them a treasure trove of sharp practices which the Brahmins employed to befool, beguile and swindle the common mass of poor, illiterate and superstitious Hindus.[30] He thought that the priestly class in Hindus must be brought under legislation. It would certainly help to kill Brahminism; and would also help to kill caste which is nothing but Brahminism incarnate. He remarked, "Brahminism is the poison which has spoiled Hinduism. You will succeed in saving Hinduism, if you kill Brahminism. *Aryasamajists* must welcome this because this is merely an application of their own doctrine of *Guna-karma*."[31] He held that Brahminism and democracy were opposed to each other. He said, "The root of the untouchability is the caste system, the root of the caste system is religion attached to *Varna* and *Ashram;* and the root of *varnashram* is Brahmanical religion; and the root of the Brahmanical religion is authoritarianism or political power."[32]

His theories about the origin of untouchability and *Shudras* were and are controversial; but his efforts and his erudition that he expressed to solve them were noteworthy.

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[28]Ambedkar—*Congress and Gandhi,* p. 215.

[29]Ambedkar's Speech in Bombay Provincial D. C. Conference, April 10-11, 1925

[30]Ambedkar—*Ranade, Gandhi and Jinnah,* p. 30.

[31]Ambedkar—*Annihilation of Caste,* p. 77.

[32]*Ambedkar Jayanti Number*—Speech at Kanpur D. C. Conference, 1944.

Constitution-Maker

Tributes were paid to Ambedkar for his zealous and arduous task of piloting the Constitution of free India in the Constituent Assembly. It was expressed by some that Ambedkar as a signatory of the Poona Pact became happy by giving equal opportunities to all classes and sections of the people who inhabited in India. A Harijan Member from Madras felt proud that Ambedkar's capacity has now been recognised not only by the Harijans, but by all communities His 'learned speeches' praised by many and 'particularly words fail to convey the gratitude for the legal acumen, the untiring industry, the consummate skill and the firmness, tempered with moderation with which the Chairman of the Drafting Committee has piloted this Constitution.'[33] It was expressed that he has secured for himself a high position in the hearts of all and requests were made by Thakurdas Bhargav that he should not consider himself the leader of the Scheduled Castes but join Congress and thereby be able to enter the circle of Congress High Command—a position which was much more significant and important than the narrow one he was occupying.[34] H. J. Khandekar, a Harijan Member, became very glad to see that Ambedkar worked very hard and not only worked, but given up the idea of separate electorates and voted for the joint electorates in the meeting of the Advisory Sub-Committee.

Ambedkar was described as 'the Modern Man' by many members. His contribution dispelled all doubts and fears and he was considered to be one of the best patriots of this country.[35] S. Sahaya said, "The achievement of independence would go to the credit of Mahatmaji and its codification to one of Mahatmaji's worst critics, *viz.* the great architect of our great Constitution, Dr. Ambedkar". He said further, "he deserves the gratitude not

[33] *C. A. Debates,* Vol. XI, p. 680.

[34] *Ibid,* p. 682.

[35] *Ibid,* p. 758.

only of this Assembly, but of this Nation... and his masterly way of piloting will ever be remembered not only by this generation, but by the posterity with gratitude."[36] Alladi Krishnaswamy Ayyar, a member of the Drafting Committee, concluded his speech by saying "I would be failing in my duty if I do not express my high appreciation of the skill and ability with which my friend, the Hon. Dr. Ambedkar, has piloted this Constitution and his untiring work as the Chairman of the Drafting Committee".[37] G. B. Pant called him 'Pandit' saying that "his scholarship is evinced in preparing the Draft of the Constitution and in making a logical exposition of 'its provision in the house.'[38] Dr. Pattabhi Sitaramayya said, "I should have liked to tell Dr. Ambedkar what a steam-roller intellect he brought to bear upon this magnificent and tremendous task : irresistible, indomitable, unconquerable levelling down all palms and short poppies; whatever he felt to be right he stood by, regardless of consequences."[39] Pandit Kunzru paid tribute to the Drafting Committee for the efficiency and thoroughness with which it dealt with its task.[40]

Dr. K. V. Rao was of the opinion that Ambedkar was not 'father' but 'mother' of the Constitution. According to him, Ambedkar had no part in making decision, and far from germinating ideas, he had to compromise his own, fail in his purpose and finally accept and advocate the ideas of others. He advocaed Presidential Executive, but later on he had to oppose it in the Constituent Assembly. Dr. K. V. Rao remarked that Nehru and Patel might be called "Father of the Nation" but he preferred to call them 'Presiding Deities' — the real sources and makers of the Constitution. Ambedkar might be called the "mother" of the Constitution.[41]

[36] *Ibid*, p. 788.
[37] *Ibid*, p. 850.
[38] *Ibid*, p. 909.
[39] *Ibid*, p. 946.
[40] *Ibid*, p. 642.
[41] K. V. Rao, *Parliamentary Democracy of India*, pp. 10-11.

Dr. Pylee in his book gave Ambedkar's estimate as a Constitutionalist. He said, "Ambedkar brought to bear upon his task a vast array of qualities, erudition, scholarship, imagination, logic, eloquence and experience. Whenever he spoke in the House, usually to reply to criticisms advanced against the provisions of the Draft Constitution, there emerged a clear and lucid exposition of the provisions of the Constitution. As he sat down, the mist of doubts vanished as also the clouds of confusion and vagueness. Indeed he was a *Modern Manu* and deserves to be called the father or the Chief Architect of the Constitution of India.[42]

Influences of John Dewey

In his essay on caste, Ambedkar had referred to John Dewey his teacher, 'whom I owe so much'. Almost all thinkers and leaders of India were children of the liberal tradition of thought of England; but Ambedkar was the only leader who received inspiration from America. He acknowledged the debt to John Dewey.

The philosophy of John Dewey is based on pragmatism; and it is often called instrumentalism. It is a tendency and movement rather than a philosophy. It is an attitude and habit of thought—a habit of looking forward to results rather than backward to first principles. Everything is to be judged by its fruits, by its consequences. Reality is found in the flow of experience. Life is a series of problems to be solved, a succession of real struggles with real difficulties, the spirit of pragmatism is the spirit of youth, adventure and experimentation. It is a forward looking philosophy of hope and promise. Instrumentalism shows how knowledge has arisen in the evolutionary movement and pointed out the function of intelligence. Looking at from the above angle to Ambedkar we can very well conclude that his view and thinking of social problems was based on instrumentalism.

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[42]M. V. Pylee, *Constitutional Government of India*, p. 138.

An Estimate

Ambedkar was a renowned scholar, distinguished educationist, masterly statesman, powerful debator, daring liberator, authoritative constitutionalist, able administrator, famous defender of the revolutionary social Reformation movement and the fearless champion of the downtrodden masses. In him culture, wisdom, wit, humanism, instinct of reason, spirit of rationalism, reasonable ruthlessness for inequality, contempt for injustice and superstitions were harmoniously blended in right proportions. He was a versatile genius. Gandhiji remarked that he was fierce and fearless.

He borrowed the evidence from the scriptures to show that discrimination had been made part of religion to facilitate exploitation of bulk of the people by those who had managed to place themselves at the highest rung of the social ladder.

He subordinated the national struggle for national independence and gave priority to the social emancipation of the untouchables. Gandhiji stressed that swaraj would be unattainable without the removal of the sins of untouchability. The nationalist movement was influenced by the above teachings of Gandhiji.

Ambedkar united the untouchables, raised them to the level of human beings and put them on the social and political map of India. Because of his leadership the bonds between elite and masses have grown and an active educated middle class is created which is to a great extent absorbed in government service; but it has limitations. He realised that the political enemy of the untouchables in a democracy where the majority ruled, was not the Brahman, (Though he was against Brahminism), but the dominant agricultural caste. He gave insistence on rights and privileges, to abolish *Mahar Watan,* and thereby tried to break feudal bonds.

Ambedkar's legacy can be traced to three important institutions : (1) People's Education Society (1945), and its Colleges; (2) Buddhist Society of India (1953), and (3) Republican

Party of India (formed on the principles laid down by him, but after his death). He was convinced that the time had come to demand the abolition of reserved seats, and to bring the untouchables in a larger group In the first general elections he made an alliance of the S.C.F. with the Socialists but did not swing socialist votes to the S.C.F. His political party kept loyalty of caste-fellows. He told Cripps that he preferred to be a leader of his community than to be a labour leader. He judged everybody by the standard of his services to the depressed classes. The essence of his all-India leadership could be seen in his loyalty to his community. He fought for centralised government necessary for Indian democracy and a guarantee of minority rights and union judiciary He showed a great skill in guiding the draft Constitution through the Constituent Assembly. But later developments brought him a sense of frustration and he said, "he was a 'hack' in preparing the Constitution."[43] His complete rout in the general elections (1952) left him, disillusioned. The general sentiment was 'He is no longer a political force but his views continue to command attention and respect."[44] One question remains to be answered : Why he characterized himself as community leader and not a labour leader. Ambedkar, by nature was a liberal. He stressed on parliamentary democracy and state socialism.

Ambedkar proved to be a great statesman besides being a fearless intellectual.

He tried to liberate Indian politics from parochialism, traditionalism and theology. He gave India its legal frame and the people the basis of their freedom. His name will figure prominently in any history of socio-political and constitutional evolution of India during the final phase of the British rule which ended with the ushuring in of the Sovereign Democratic Republic of India. His role as a politician and his intellectual contribution

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[43] *The Times of India*, 3-7-1954.

[44] *The Times of India*, 4-5-1956.

have become an integral part of the story of India's political evolution.[45] He influenced important political decisions and his remarkable ability for constructive statesmanship manifested spontaneously during the period of constitution-making.[46]

Ambedkar asked Bhaurao Gaekwad to suspend the struggle for *Mahar Watan* Bill, because the thought it antagonised the touchables. He emphasised that this struggle would jeopardise the interests of the Mahar Community. The way to court jail was regarded by him as useless as it kept them in jails, without any action. He asked his followers to discard *satyagraha* as a weapon. He emphatically urged to place the demands of the Scheduled Castes before the Government, and asked them to take care that the movement should not be turned into a mass *satyagraha*.[47] According to him, the rule of law meant abandoning, not only 'the bloody methods of revolution', but also the methods of civil disobedience, non-cooperation and *satyagraha*. Though Ambedkar had received western education, still he was not westernized in the sense Nehru was. He pointed out that the Scheduled Castes had two enemies : Brahminism and capitalism; but what was his way to fight them ? Not by adopting only parliamentary methods, but by waging class battles in cooperation with other like-minded parties. That was the greatest drawback in his political thinking.

Ambedkar's way of thinking was characterised by Dr. Jatau as *social humanism*. It contained following principles—(1) Equality among human beings; (2) every human being as an end in himself; (3) right of every human being to social, economic, political and religious freedom; (4) to make every human being free from want and fear; (5) to maintain liberty, equality, fraternity, and strive to secure redemption from oppression and exploitation of man by man, of class by class, and of nation by

[45] Rajashekharaiya, *The Politics of Emancipation*, p. 326.

[46] *Ibid*, pp. 327-328.

[47] *Letters to Gaekwad*, pp. 280-281, pp. 332-334.

nation; (6) to stand for a democratic society under a parliamentary system of government; (7) to believe in non-violence as an instrument of social change and adopt peaceful and persuasive methods to avoid class conflicts and the possibility of civil war; (8) to avoid any 'ism' or any theory or dogma in its extreme aspect; (9) need for spiritual discipline; and (10) firm foundations of universal love, equity and human brotherhood that the Buddha taught.[48]

Ambedkar adopted the following principles in his political thinking; recognition of the practical force of nationalism; crusade for social, economic and political freedom in terms of liberty, equality and fraternity; a dislike of any type of imperialism—political, social, economic or religious; a commitment to constitutional methods as the only way, a detestation of violence and a love of justice and peace; a bias for democratic dynamism; a hufanism which sees man as the maker of civilisation and culture and as having the potentiality to rise on the basis of love and knowledge [49]

Ambedkar's rejection of the demand for separate electorates, his compromise with national leadership in the later period were significant. If this would have been brought into practice before, the whole national movement would have taken a definite turn. His rejection of Marxism and embracing Buddhism were reactionary steps. He had no class programme. "It is inconceivable how he could achieve socialism by repudiating Marxism and making Buddhism an alternative to Marxism." In a way he had led "the whole movement of workers and peasants into reactionary and metaphysical conceptions."[50] The dichotomy between the leadership of the depressed classes and exploited classes increased. The dichotomy between one party for social uplift and another for political aims must be ended.

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[48]D. R. Jatav, *Social Philosophy of Dr. Ambedkar.*

[49]D. R. Jatav, *The Political-Philosophy of Dr. Ambedkar*, pp. 244-246.

[50]Dr. W. N. Kuber, *Dr. Ambedkar—A Critical Study*, p. 307.

The untouchables under the leadership of Ambedkar had chosen the path of westernisation than sanskritisation. Reform in the inner caste groups, insistence on the leadership within the group, political demands, rejection of orthodox religion, have given his movement a definite shape. Separatist tendencies were and are visible; but they could be controlled with the help of integrating forces.

Ambedkar had submitted to the R.T.C. a scheme of political safeguards for the protection of the Depressed Classes in the future Constitution of a self-governing India. He demanded : (1) equal citizenship, and fundamental rights declaring the practice of 'untouchability' as illegal; (2) free enjoyment of 'Equal Rights' protected by adequate constitutional remedies; (3) protection against discrimination; (4) adequate representation to the Depressed Classes in the Legislatures; adult suffrage and separate electorates to the Depressed Classes for ten years; (5) adequate representation in services; (6) redress against prejudicial action or neglect of interests—facilities for education, etc.; (7) special departmental care, special minister and welfare bureaus; and (8) seat in the Cabinet. If we examine the above demands, we can clearly remark that all these have been already brought into practice—thanks to the untiring efforts of Ambedkar and progressive democratic traditions of Indian nationalism. The Karachi Congress Resolution on fundamental rights was passed as early as April 1931. Gandhiji made removal of untouchability as one of the programmes of the national movement. He said in 1920, "Without the removal of that taint swaraj is a meaningless sign".

In India social idealism and political idealism were opposed to each other. Ambedkar earnestly wished that the political idealism of the majority would become the social idealism of all. The essence of his all-India leadership could be seen in his loyalty to his community. He always placed the freedom and welfare of his community above the attainment of swaraj. But when swaraj was in sight he made a compromise with the national leadership. He did not dominate politics, but influenced important

political decision. Though he was the leader of his community he tried to secularise Indian politics. Impact of the west, rule of law, equality of citizens, political participation in law-making and policy decisions, massive efforts of social reforms by Raja Rammohan Roy, Ranade, Phooley, Agarkar and others; democratic liberalism, adult franchise—were some of the factors which contributed to the secular trends in Indian politics. The Preamble of the Indian Constitution is a unique instance. Dr. Ambedkar was a contributor to the above trend.

National integration was a burning problem. Education and economic development, rational and empirical outlook, modern science and technology, secular outlook to socio-economic problems and constitutional approach contributed much to national integration. Ambedkar discarded separatist tendencies, and tried to become one with the national trend. In this respect his contribution to national integration was great. He vitalised the national life of India. His constructive statesmanship carved a definite place for him in the line of the nation builders.

XIV

Vision of India

Communalism and Nationalism

ACCORDING TO AMBEDKAR, nationalism is a force in the history of mankind. It was a feeling of oneness and not to belong to any other group. This was the essence of what is called a nationality and national freeling.[1]

Ambedkar's nationalism started with a different cause amounted to the welfare of the down-trodden and poor. He wanted equality and civic rights for those persons who were deprived of them for centuries past. Nationalism in him began in protest, both against external domination and internal oppression. National urge came to him through his pride and dignity both for the country and its people. He made a clear distinction, between the freedom of the country and of the people of that country. He stressed that without the freedom of the people, nationalism became a means of internal slavery, forced labour and organised tyranny for the poor and servile classes. To him, nationalism meant the negation of caste-spirit and caste-spirit was nothing but a deep-rooted communalism. He was convinced that nationalism was to receive its perfect harmony in the realization of social brotherhood of men irrespective of caste, colour and creed. He expressed his feelings as regards nationalism in terms

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[1]Ambedkar—*Pakistan or Partition of India*, p. 13.

of majority and minority. "Any claim for the sharing of power by the minority is called communalism, while monopolizing the whole power by the majority is called nationalism."[2] His view of nationalism demanded not only the liberation of every slave country, but also the freedom for all subjects and subjugated masses even in free countries.

Political-minded people resented the expression, 'The people of India' in the Constituent Assembly of India. They preferred to the expression : 'The Indian Nation'. Ambedkar asked : "How can people divided into several thousands of castes be a nation ?" He said further, "the sooner we realise that *we are not as yet a nation* in the social and psychological sense of the word, the better for us.[3]

Ambedkar tried to link the interests of the depressed classes and their liberation with the common national movement of liberation. He remarked, "It is only in a Swaraj Constitution, that you stand any chance of getting the political power into your own hands without which you cannot bring salvation to your people."[4] But this anti-imperialist trend was not always present in the depressed classes.

Ambedkar made clear that on the inauguration of the Constitution, India has attained equality in politics but he warned that there was still inequality in social and economic life. He urged to remove this contradiction at the earliest moment, "or else those who suffer from inequality will blow up the structure of political democracy which this Assembly has so laboriously built up".[5]

According to Ambedkar, the problem of abolishing untouchability was bound up with that of a basic socio-economic reconstruction of the Indian Society. The anti-untouchability movement was the expression of the growth of larger national and

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[2]Ambedkar—*States and Minorities*, p. 52.
[3]*C. A. Debates*, Vol. VII, p. 980.
[4]R. P. Dutt, *India To-day*, pp. 243-244.
[5]*C. A. Debates*, Vol. XI, p. 977.

human consciousness among the Indian people. It was an essential part of the national and democratic movement of the Indian people. The untouchables were mostly landless labourers, semi-serfs, or engaged in the worst position of occupations. They suffered from two-fold evils : economic and social. Their social position accentuated their economic exploitation and their miserable economic conditions tended to stabilize their low status.

When Ambedkar was expressing the demands of the people, and was leading the masses, he, as a leader, went ahead of his followers This could be seen from his participation in the demonstrations against the anti-strike Bill sponsored by the Congress in Bombay in 1938. He joined Communists and other Trade Union leaders and brought about a successful strike of workers in Bombay. But when he was not backed by mass movements, he became isolated and pro-government and communal tendencies became dominant.

Ambedkar's criticism of Congress and Gandhiji, the vulgarisation he made of 'the fight for freedom' naturally aroused the sentiments of the people and many leaders attacked him as anti-national and therefore pro-British K. Santhanam remarked, "When hostility to Congress became the main qualification for membership to the vacant seat (Viceroy's Executive Council) Dr. Ambedkar got his chance on the eve of the great struggle of August 1942". Ambedkar wrote his book on 'Congress and Gandhi' in 1945, *i.e.* when he was the member of the Viceroy's Executive Council, K. Santhanam blamed him and remarked that his eminence was due to his hostility towards Congress.[6] Rajaji charged Ambedkar of disconnecting the Scheduled Classes from the Congress movement.[7]

In America, Ambedkar came in contact with Lala Lajpat Rai who was exiled from India. When Lalaji knew that Ambedkar was an untouchable by birth, he tried to win him over and persuade him to join the political movement. Lalaji's

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[6]K. Santhanam, *Ambedkar Refuted*, p. 25.

[7]Rajagopalachari, *Ambedkar's Attack*, p. 8.

efforts to win over Ambedkar failed. Ambedkar used to say : "You subjugate untouchables, and you remove your political slavery; because of this the untouchables will not join the nationalist movement.[8]

Ambedkar remarked that the governing class was aware that a political campaign based on class ideology, class interests, class issues and class conflicts would toll its death knel. It knew that the most effective way of side-tracking the servile classes and fooling them was to play upon the sentiment of nationalism and national-unity and realised that the Congress platform was the only platform that could effectively safeguard the interest of the governing class. According to him, the reservations demanded by the servile classes were really controls over the power of the governing classes.

According to Ambedkar, nationalism in relation to a nation, should be based fundamentally on a strong feeling of social unity, and nationalism in relation to internationalism should be founded on brotherhood. He emphasized that nationalism should not be tyranny and menace to any other community and country. Nationality means, 'consciousness of any kind, awareness of the existence of that tie of kinship' and nationalism means, 'the desire for a separate national existence for those who are bound by this tie of kinship'. He stressed that there cannot be nationalism without the feeling of nationality being in existence.[9] He remarked that high-caste Hindus might cheat the lower castes of Hindus in the name of nationalism. The national movement envisaged in the form of the Partition of Bengal and its anti-government character was looked upon by Ambedkar as the selfish manoeuvre of the high-caste Hindus.[10]

Social Amelioration

As a mark of respect Ambedkar dedicated his book "Who

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[8]Khairmoday, *Life of Ambedkar* (Marathi), Vol. I, p. 72.
[9]Ambedkar, *Pakistan*, p. 21.
[10]*Ibid*, p. 107.

were Shudras ?" to Phooley. The followers of Phooley called Brahmins 'Enemies of the Nation'. Shahu Maharaj of Kolhapur saw in Ambedkar a promising youth who might be able to lead the non-Brahmin movement. He asked him to consult Messrs Little and Co. in London whether Tilak can be prosecuted for his statement—that Mahars were a criminal tribe.[11] In another letter the Maharaja wrote, "The present scheme of self-government for India (1919) will not make the people free and equal, but will only make the Brahmins powerful. A Brahmin oligarchy possessed of political power will be a menace to the Empire and a drag on the onward march of the Indian people".[12] At the end he hoped that the non-Brahmins would get sympathetic hearing from the British. The non-Brahmin movement demanded the 'protection and guidance of the British Government'[13] until the ineffectiveness of the evil of the caste system became manifest.

All this did not make any effect on Ambedkar.

Ambedkar on many occasions had analysed the causes of the failure of this movement. He said that the non-Brahmin parties prostituted their positions of power for providing jobs for their men and nothing more. The non-Brahmin parties forgot the class from which they came. He criticised that many of the non-Brahmin partymen tried to become second-class Brahmins; they have not abandoned Brahminism.[14] Phooley's ideas did not make progress among non-Brahmins. Caste-consciousness became sharp in 1916 when Montague arrived in India to consult the people and the Government of India about the future form of government.[15] To him, the main beneficiaries of this movement were the land-owning dominant castes.[16] Though he fought Brahminism still he was not anti-Brahmin.

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[11] *Bombay University Ambedkar Collections.*
[12] *Ibid.*
[13] G. S. Ghurye, *Caste and Class in India,* p. 201.
[14] Keer, *op cit.,* pp. 341-350.
[15] M. N. Srinivas, *Castes in Modern India and other Essays,* pp. 20-23.
[16] Khairmoday, Vol. II, p. 193.

According to Ambedkar, the non-Brahmin leaders had no loyalties to the cause, they forgot to bring the non-Brahmin castes on equal footing. Marathas began to preach their superiority and the distinction between Marathas and non-Marathas became clear in all the party programmes. Even in the educational conferences of the non-Brahmins, the untouchables were seated away from others for fear of being polluted. Even non-Brahmin leaders like B. V. Jadhav asked Marathas to vote for Marathas in General Elections. The untouchable community had to place in that movement. That is why the untouchables though attracted towards the non-Brahmin movement could not become one with it.[17] The non-Brahmin members in Bombay Legislative Council opposed the Bill for the removal of untouchability. The upper-class Marathas did not support Ambedkar in Mahad Tank *satyagraha*. He said that the Marathas were not progressive as they opposed the *Mahar Watan* Bill.[18] He remarked, "There is no man of eminence among them (Marathas) such as Tilak, Gokhale or Ranade."[19] In a message given to the *Satyashodhak* magazine on the 16th Satyashodhak Social Conference, Ambedkar said, "The non-Brahmins have effaced the memory of Jyotiba Phooley completely. Not only that but that class has shamelessly betrayed his philosophy"[20] Anti-Brahminism became a progressive force so far as it tried to boost up the untouchables in general and Ambedkar in particular; but the leaders of the non-Brahmin movement used the movement for their sectarian motives and they excluded untouchables from the orbit of the movement.

Though Ambedkar was inspired by the teachings of Phooley, still he was disillusioned by the professions of his so-called disciples who led the non-Brahmin movement in the communal and anti-social channels.

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[17]*Ibid*, pp. 14-20

[18]*Ibid*, pp. 227-228 .

[19]Ambedkar, *Pakistan*, p. 28.

[20]*Satyashodhak*, December, 1950.

XV

Extracts

A FEW EXTRACTS from the writing of Ambedkar are given below. They express his typical views on different topics.

"...If one agrees with the definition of slave as given by Plato, who defines him as one who accepts from another the purposes which control his conduct, the untouchables are really slaves. The untouchables are so socialized as never to complain of their low estate. Still less do they ever dream of trying to improve their lot, by forcing the other classes to treat them with that common respect which one man owes to another. The idea that they have been born to their lot is so ingrained in their mind that it never occurs to them to think that their fate is anything but irrevocable. Nothing will ever persuade them that men are all made of the same clay, or that they have the right to insist on better treatment than that meted out to them"

".. We have therefore two possible methods of meeting the situation: either to reserve seats in plural constituencies for those minorities that cannot otherwise secure personal representation, or grant communal electorates. Both have their usefulness. So far as the representation of the Mohammedans is concerned, it is highly desirable that they should participate in a general election with seats reserved for them in plural constituencies."

"...The new consciousness insists on dividing the touchables group into Brahmins and non-Brahmins each with its own separate interests. Separate electorates or reserved seats in mixed electorates are

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—From :—Dr. Ambedkar's Evidence before the Franchise Committee (Southborough, 1919).

[Dr. M. P. Mangudkar, (ed.) *Ambedkar and Parliamentary Democracy*,, pp 8, 9, 10 & 13].

demanded for the three groups in which the Hindus are divided. Before dealing with the problem of the representation of the untouchables something will be said on the question of the Brahmins and non-Brahmins.

" .That the non-Brahmins are "backward in educational matters cannot be said in any way to be their special interest. It is the general interest of all even of those Brahmins who are educationally backward. "The intellectual and social domination of the Brahmins" is not a matter that affects the non-Brahmins alone. It affects all and it is therefore the interest of all. What remains then as a special interest for the non-Brahmins to require their protection ?

The case for separate representation for non-Brahmins fails because they cannot prove to have a common non-Brahmin interest".

Evils of Hindu Religion

"(1) It (Hindu religion) tends to deprive moral life of freedom and spontaneity and to reduce it to a more or less anxious and servile conformity to externally imposed rules. (2) There is no loyalty to ideas, there is only conformity to commands. (3) The laws are inequitous in that they are not the same for one class as for another. The laws are prescribed to be the same for all generations. (4) The laws are not made by certain persons called prophets or law-givers. (5) This code has been invested with the character of finality and fixity."

He concluded that this religion must be destroyed and there was nothing irreligious in working for the destruction of such a religion.

—*Annihilation of Caste,* pp. 73-74

Brahminism

To-day all the scholarship is confined to Brahmins. But, unfortunately, no Brahmin scholar has so far come forward to play the part of a Voltaire who had the intellectual honesty to rise against the doctrines of the Catholic Church in which he was brought up; nor is one likely to appear on the scene in the future. It is a grave reflection on the scholarship of Brahmins that they should not have produced a Voltaire...The Brahmin scholar is only a learned man. He is not an intellectual...Every

Brahmin is interested in the maintenance of Brahmanic supremacy. A Voltaire among the Brahmins would be a positive danger to the maintenance of a civilization which is contrived to maintain Brahmanic supremacy.

—*Untouchables—Preface* pp. 2-3

Arya Samajists

The book (*Who were the Shudras?*) treads heavily on the toes of the Arya Samajists. My conclusions have come in sharp conflict with their ideology at two most important points. The Arya Samajists believe that the four *varnas* of the Indo-Aryan society have been in existence from the very beginning. The book shows that there was a time when there were only three *varnas* in the Indo-Aryan society. The Arya Samajists believe that the *Vedas* are eternal and sacrosanct. The book shows that portions of the *Vedas* at any rate, particularly the *Purusha Sukta,* which is the mainstay of the Arya Samajists, are fabrications by Brahmins, intended to serve their own purposes. Both these conclusions are bound to act like atomic bombs on the dogmas of the Arya Samajists...The Arya Samajists have done great mischief in making the Hindu Society a stationary society by preaching that the *Vedas* are eternal, without beginning, without end, and infallible and that the social institutions of the Hindus being based on the *Vedas* are also eternal, without beginning, without end, infallible and therefore requiring no change."

—*Who were the Shudras?* Preface pp. 7-8

Majority and Minority

In India, the majority is a communal majority. No matter what social and political programme it may have, the majority will retain its character of being a communal majority. The British type of Executive will make the minority community a subject race. Such a state of affairs cannot be called democracy. It will have to be called imperialism.

—*States and Minorities,* p. 36

Ambedkar asked : "What would be Swaraj to the untouchables ?" He replied, "In addition to the hostile administration, there would be an indifferent legislature and a callous executive. So, under Swaraj, the untouchables would have no way of escape from the destiny of degradation which Hindus and Hinduism had fixed for them"

A form of executive is suggested by Ambedkar : "(1) to prevent the majority from forming a government without giving an opportunity to the minorities to have a say in the matter; (2) to prevent the majority from having exclusive control over administration and thereby make the tyranny of the minority by the majority possible, (3) to prevent the inclusion of the majority party in the executive of the representatives of the minorities who have no confidence of the minorities; (4) to provide a stable executive necessary for good and efficient administration"

Finally, he suggested the appointment of an officer to be called Superintendent of Minority Affairs

—*Ibid*, pp 37-38.

Effects of Castes on Elections

(1) Voting is always communal; (2) the majority community carries the seat by sheer communal majority; (3) the minority community is forced to vote the candidate of the majority community; (4) minority votes are insufficient; (5) voter of the major communities never condescends to vote the candidate of the minority community; (6) a voter of the minority community takes pride in giving votes to the candidates of the major community.

—*'Thoughts on Linguistic States'*, p. 34.

Liberalism

If the Liberals have faith in and love and respect for Ranade their supreme duty lies not merely in assembling together to sing his praises but in organising themselves for spreading the gospel of Ranade.

What hope is there of the Liberals coming forward to fulfil

this duty? Signs are very depressing. In the last election (1936) the Liberals did not even contest the seats. That, of course, is in itself a matter of some surprise. But this pales into nothing when one recalls the announcement made by the Rt. Hon. Srinivasa Sastri—the leading light of the Liberal Party—that he wished the Congress to succeed! There is no parallel to this except in the treacherous and treasonable conduct of Bhishma who lived on the bounty of the Kauravas but wished and worked for success to their enemies, the Pandavas. This shows even the Liberals had lost faith in the gospel of Ranade. If this is the general condition of health of the Liberal Party it is better if the Party died. It would clear the way for a new orientation and spare us the tedium of idle clatter of liberals and liberalism. For such an event even Ranade may express satisfaction from his grave.

—*Ranade, Gandhi and Jinnah*, pp. 63-64.

Parliamentary Democracy

(1) Western writers omit to take into account the incontrovertible fact that in every country there is a governing class. (2) They fail to realise that the resistance of a governing class is inconsistent with democracy and self-government. (3) Self-government and democracy become real only when the governing class loses its power to capture the power to govern. (4) The governing class may be so well entrenched that the servile classes will need other safeguards besides adult suffrage to achieve the same end. (5) Social outlook and social philosophy of the governing class is not taken into account.

—*Pakistan or Partition of India*, p. 300

Democracy is "a form and method of Government whereby revolutionary changes in the economic and social life of the people are brought about without bloodshed. The conditions are as follows: (1) There should not be glaring inequalities in society *i.e.* privileges for one class; (2) the existence of an opposition; (3) equality in law and administration; (4) observance of

constitutional morality; (5) no tyranny of the majority; (6) moral order of society; and (7) public conscience.

—*Parliamentary Democracy*, p. 6

Democracy is not a form of government, but a form of social organisation.

—*States and Minorities*, p. 32,

Devices essential to maintain democracy :— (1) Constitutional methods. The methods like civil disobedience, non-co-operation and *satyagraha,* he regarded as 'Grammar of Anarchy'. (2) Not to lay liberties at the feet of a great man—*Bhakti* or hero-worship is a sure road to degradation and eventual dictatorship. (3) Make a political democracy a social democracy.

Constituent Assembly Debates, Vol. XI, p. 979.

The Directive Principles have a great value for they lay down the ideal of economic democracy.

—*C.A. Debates,* Vol. VII, p. 494

In his book, 'States and Minorities' he maintained that fundamental rights are of no use to the underdog in the absence of economic security. Parliamentary democracy by itself could not achieve the economic ideal and the alternative of dictatorship could be defeated only by realizing state socialism within the framework of parliamentary democracy.

Secular State

The conception of a secular state is derived from the liberal democratic tradition of the West. No institution which is maintained wholly out of state funds shall be used for the purpose of religious instruction irrespective of the question whether the religious instruction is given by the state or by any other body.

—*C.A. Debates,* Vol. VII, pp. 870-871.

Participating in the debate on Hindu Code Bill in Parliament in 1951 he explained the concept of secularism as follows :—"It

(secular state) does not mean that we shall not take into consideration the religious sentiments of the people. All that a secular state means is that this Parliament shall not be competent to impose any particular religion upon the rest of the people. That is the only limitation that the Constitution recognises."

—*Parliamentary Debates*, Vol. III, Part II, p 2466.

The state should guarantee to its citizens the liberty of conscience and the free exercise of his religion including the right to profess, to preach and to convert within limits compatible with public order and morality.

—*States and Minorities*, p. 11.

Linguistic States

According to Ambedkar, linguistic province meant a province which by the social composition of its population would be homogeneous and therefore more suited for the realization of those social ends which a democratic government must fulfil. In his view, a linguistic province had nothing to do with the language of the province He remarked, "The Constitution should provide that the official language of every province shall be the same as the official language of the Central Government".[1] He said that the constituents in a federal state should not be on linguistic principles The danger lies in creating linguistic provinces with the language of each province as its official language. Ambedkar stated : "To allow this is to allow the provinces to become independent nations".[2] He was of opinion that linguistic provinces would work democracy better, because they would produce social homogeneity. He felt the necessity of emotional harmony or national integration through one common language, Hindi. He asked—"What is the use of the precious books ? (of poet-saints

[1]Ambedkar's statement before Linguistic Provinces Commission, p. 6.
[2]*Ibid*, p. 7.

of Dnyaneshwar and Tukaram). He favoured "one language, many states" formula.

Ambedkar was in favour of the formation of multi-lingual states. In order to safeguard the interests of minorities he suggested establishment of committees of members belonging to different linguistic states, with the right of appeal to the governor. After the death of *Pottil Shriramalu* he prophecised that some other uni-lingual provinces might come into existence He opposed unification of Maharashtra. He said, "I do not even like to call myself a Maharashtrian".[3] The struggle for a United Maharashtra was carried on through a one non-party body. Eminent persons like D. R. Gadgil, D. V. Potdar, S A. Dange, Shankar Rao Deo and M. R. Jayakar, comprising all shades of opinion, participated in the formation of samyukta Maharashtra Parishad This Parishad submitted its evidence before the States Reorganisation Commission (S.R.C.); but Ambedkar submitted his own evidence before the Commission. The protagonists of United Maharashtra established Samyukta Maharashtra Samiti and carried on agitation against the bilingual Bombay State. The Scheduled Castes Federation (S C.F.) led by Ambedkar was a constituent Party of the Samiti. He said that bilingual Bombay State must be ended. He remarked that he was opposed to United Maharashtra, and to bilingual Bombay State also.[4]

According to him, linguism in the country was only another name for communalism. In Maharashtra, the Marathas formed the majority community. He stated, 'Those who are going to rule are not Marathas by speech, but Marathas by caste'.[5] He was aware that 'the minorities especially the Scheduled Castes and Tribes would not get justice at the hands of the Marathas.'[6] He

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[3]Speech in Rajya Sabha, 2-9-1953, pp. 864—879.

[4]*Letters to Gaekwad*, p. 34.

[5]*Thoughts on Linguistic States*, p. 28.

[6]Srinivas, *Caste in Modern India*, p. 25.

remarked, "There is no man of eminence among them (Marathas) such as Tilak, Gokhale, or Ranade".[7]

He warned about the communal majority which is born. He emphasized small states. According to him, as the area increases the proportion of the majority to minority decreases. To protect the minorities, he suggested, the Constitution must be amended, and the provision must be made for a system of plural-member constituencies (2 or 3) with cumulative voting.[8]

Plan to end Constitutional Deadlock

Ambedkar outlined what he described as the Skeleton Act of the Government of India (Preliminary Provisions Act). The main promises of the Act were as follows :—(1) A poll of Muslims and non-Muslims be taken for or against separation. If the majority of Muslims were in favour of separation and a majority of non-Muslims were against separation, steps must be taken to delimit the areas wherever it was possible by redrawing provincial boundaries on ethnic and cultural lines by separating the Muslim-majority districts from the districts in which the majority consisted of non-Muslims. (2) A Boundary Commission should be set up preferably an International Commission. (3) Partition of the country into Hindustan and Pakistan.

He agreed for a separate referendum of non-Muslims, only to decide whether they preferred to go in Pakistan or come into Hindustan.

In his Scheme a Council was provided. It could not be mistaken by a Federation. It was not even a Confederation. It could be used as a coupling between Hindustan and Pakistan.

. . . —*'Pakistan or Partition of India'* pp. 384-390

India's Sovereignty and Paramountcy

Ambedkar upheld India's paramountcy and sovereignty with regard to princely states. He remarked, "When the whole of

[7]*Thoughts on Linguistic States*, p. 28.
[8]*Ibid*, p. 33.

sovereignty is transferred the territory of that particular ruler becomes the territory of India, with complete sovereignty vested in the Indian Union"[9] He said that he would ask the interim government at the Centre to take the following steps :—"(1) To notify His Majesty's Government that the British Parliament has no right to pass any law abrogating paramountcy and that any clause to that effect in the forthcoming legislation conferring Dominion Status on India would be treated by the people of India as repugnant to their sovereignty and therefore null and void. (2) To declare that the Government of India will never recognise any Indian State as sovereign independent state. (3) To inform the U.N.O. that admitting an Indian State which declares itself as sovereign independent state to the membership of U.N.O. would meet with the strongest objection from the people of India as a violation of the sovereign rights of the Union of India".[10]

Constitution is Socialistic

K. T Shah tabled an amendment to the first Article of the Constitution. It said, "India shall be a secular, federal, socialist Union of States".

Ambedkar said that the amendment is superfluous. He remarked, "If these Directive Principles are not socialistic in their direction, and in their content, I fail to understand what more socialism can be. These socialistic principles are already embodied in our Constitution"—*C.A. Debates*'. Vol. VII, p. 709.

Economic Democracy

Ambedkar observed that the proposed Constitution sought to establish political democracy and to lay down an ideal before those who would be forming the Government. That ideal was economic democracy. To Ambedkar, the Directive Principles

[9]*C. A. Debates*, Vol. VII, p. 42.

[10]A. C. Banerjee, *Making of the Indian Constitution*, pp. 486-494.

have a great value, for they lay down that 'our ideal is economic democracy—*Constituent Assembly Debates,* Vol. VII, p. 494

Agricultural Labour

Ambedkar had before him not only industrial labour but also agricultural labour According to him, similar conditions of work, provident funds, employer's liability, workmen's compensation, health insurance including invalidity pensions would be open to all sorts of labour, whether it is industrial labour or agricultural labour

—'*Constituent Assembly Debates*' Vol. IX, p. 944-945.

Class Structure

The recognition of the class structure of society, Ambedkar regarded, as 'undemocratic and unrealistic'. He denounced the sanctity of the class structure of society. He remarked, "The isolation and exclusiveness following upon the class structure creates in the privileged classes the anti-social spirit of a gang."

—*Congress and Gandhi* p. 296.

State Socialism

Ambedkar's idea of socialism was an attack on poverty. He emphasised two concepts : "concept of state socialism" and "the concept of constitutional law and parliamentary Democracy." He advocated state ownership of agricultural land with a democratic 'collectivized method of cultivation'.

'Consolidation of holdings' and 'tenancy legislation' would not, he regarded, benefit landless labourers, including the servile classes, the Shudras and untouchables; only collective farm, can help them, provided that agriculture becomes a 'state industry' (Ambedkar : '*States and Minorities*' p. 15).

Ambedkar thought that the problem of landless labourers must be solved by taking over the uncultivated lands for cultivation, and giving them to the landless labourers. According to him, the consolidation of holdings and the tenancy legislation are worse

than useless. "They are of no help to untouchables, who are landless labourers; only collective farms can help them." (Keer, *op, cit;* p. 375).

"After abolishing landlordism, the state must be the owner of the land and not the proprietor or the peasant. The natural consequence of the abolition of landlordism must be collective farming or cooperative farming."

Ambedkar regarded untouchables as perfectly economically dependend on touchables. He proposed state ownership in agriculture with a collectivized method of cultivation and a modified form of state of socialism in the field of industry. (Ambedkar : '*States and Minorities*', p. 37).

'Where is sufficient land to give all ?' Ambedkar said He was discussing some problems with S. A. Dange. Ambedkar said, "I prefer to Soviet System. The collectivization of agriculture is the only way to our ills The Soviet system of agriculture is, according to me, the best." ('Navayug'-Special Numbers).

Casteism and Socialism

According to Ambedkar, caste-consciousness hampers all economic growth. It creates conditions which are harmful for collective efforts in agriculture and other activities. Rural development, in the presence of caste relations, would be against the principles of socialism. Therefore the great feudal estates based on casteism must be broken up and the land be distributed to the people who till it and who can collectively produce things for the rapid progress of both cities and villages.

—*Annihilation of Caste*, p. 19.

Nationalisation of Industries

Ambedkar suggested nationalisation of life insurance and advocated state management and state ownership in industry.

—*S.C.F. Manifesto*, 1952.

Attack on Gandhism

"Gandhism is the philosophy of the well-to-do and the leisure class. It deluded people into accepting their misfortunes by presenting them as best of good fortunes. Gandhism seeks to perpetuate the system of scavenging as the noblest service to society. But these are evils that are deliberately imposed by one class over another." *Congress and Gandhi,* pp. 280-284.

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Appendix II

Glossary of Some Important Words

Anarya (Non-Aryan) z

A comprehensive term applied in the ancient texts to all those aboriginal native and hence inferior non-Aryan tribes and peoples who inhabited India at the time of the Aryan invasion in contradistinction to the noble Aryan conquerers Many tribes were enslaved by Aryan invaders and according to some authorities degraded to the category of Dāsa (helots).

Asrama

A stage in the progress through life of the twice-born Hindu The life of the twice-born upper caste Hindu was divided into four periods or stages and he was expected to spend some time in each, in order to repay debts he owed to the gods (by sacrifice), to the rishis (by study) and to the ancestors (by raising male progeny). The four stages are: (1) *Brahmacharya* (religious living), (2) *Grihasthya* (household), (3) *Vanaprasthya* (forest departure) and (4) *Sanyasa* (renunciation).

Bhagavadgita ('Song of the Lord')—a philosophical interlude comprising the 25th to 42nd chapters of the *Bhismaparva* sections of the *Mahabharata*. It does not belong to the *sruti* or revealed class of writings but to the *smriti* or traditional works.

Bodhisattva (enlightened being).

One of the central concepts of Mahāyana is that of the 'Saviour Buddha' who appears at intervals on earth to guide men along the path to salvation Originally the term referred to those who took the vows of them."—Kave, (Hindu Society)—"Caste is not occupational in beings of Buddhahood.

Brahminism

The religion of Brahminism is in fact a system of *Varnashram*. It was supposed to be founded on the authority of the *Vedas* which were

considered infallible There are four *varnas* in the hierarchy of the system of the *Varnashram* with a fifth outside its pale The first three castes, the Brahmin, the Kshatriya and the Vaishya were recognised as twice-born meaning that they went through *upanayan*—a ceremony of initiation.

Buddha (? 568-483 ? B C)

His name was Siddhartha, son of Shuddhodana, a Kšhatriya king of Mongolian stock and a member of a Gautama clan of the Shakhya tribe His mother was queen *Māyā*, a Lichchavi princess

Buddhism

Based on the teachings of Gautama Buddha There is nothing in the life of Buddha to indicate that he set out to 'reform' Hinduism He was strongly opposed to religious ritual, to ceremonial worship and the sacrificial system, and considered the whole idea of the caste system as false and wrong and in this sense Buddhism may be regarded as a reaction against the pretensions of Brahminism and the authority of the *Vedas*

Caste

"A caste is in some ways a cell-like structure which for many purposes is separated from other similar cells and lives a life partly independent of them."—Karve, (Hindu Society)—"Caste is not occupational in origin."—Ghurye : 'Caste, Clan, Occupation' p 242 Occupational flexibility is denied to almost all, due to the mechanism of caste (Mahars have become the most urbanised caste according to 1961 census Maharashtra 23%).

Chaturvarnya

The four-fold division of society is described by Manu, the ancient Hindu law-giver, as the *Chaturvarnya* system of social organization This *Varnashram* arrangement recognizes the principle of division of work based on birth as the basis of social organization The Hindu social organisation is based on the stratification of the society into four classes or varna · (1) the Brahman; (2) the Kshatriya, (3) the Vaishya and (4) Shudra.

Maharwada

Mahars are an important part of the Maharashtra village "Wherever there is a village, there is a *Maharwada*" is a popular saying Their residential quarters are situated outside the village and known

as *Maharwada*

Mahars occupy a position midway between the Marathas and the primitives.

The duties of the Mahars to the village, were to cut firewood, carry letters, sweep and clean yards in front of the houses, carry cowdung cakes to the cremation grounds and to dig graves. They have been the hereditary village servants. They escorted government treasuries, acted as guides and messengers to public officers, called land-holders to pay the land assessment at the village office and swept the village roads.

Manu (? 600 B C-A.D. 300 ?).

Author of a famous code of Hindu law and jurisprudence.

The code of Manu is known variously as the *Manusmriti*. The code lays down social, moral and ethical precepts for the guidance of the people and formulates rules for the observance of rites and ceremonies.

The chief design of the Code seems to have been to give divine sanction to the institution of caste, to make caste supreme in India and the Brahmins supreme among the castes.

Shudra

The fourth Hindu caste. A tribe known as the Shudra is mentioned in the Mahabharat and Puranas, sometimes in association with non-Aryan Abhiras. One theory is that they were absorbed into the Aryan class structure as a fourth caste. On the other hand, the Shudra caste may have evolved from a poor uncultivated class of Aryans, who did menial work in the Aryan camps. A shudra was not to accumulate wealth.

Vaisya

The third of the four Hindu castes. Although traditionally regarded as one of the 'twice-born' and entitled to some of the privileges accorded to the two upper castes, the Vaisya was generally held in low esteem. He was the trader, grocer, moneylender and merchant.

Veda

The primary scriptures of Hinduism the *Vedas* are revered as *apaurusheya* (not of human origin) and are honoured by epithets usually reserved for the gods, such as eternal, imperishable, infallible, indestructible.

The *Vedas* consist primarily of four collections of hymns. They are named according to the traditional purpose of their poetical portions which are called *Samhitas* (put together). Originally there were three *Vedas*, *Rig*, *Yajur* and *Sama*. The four divisions of the scriptures are : *Mantra*, *Brahman*, *Arnyaka* and *Upanishad*.

Appendix-III

Post-Ambedkar Developments

The two decades following the death of Ambedkar were conspicuous by two epoch-making events. One was the conversion movement and the other was the formation of the Republican Party of India—and its reaction, the Dalit Panther movement. An attempt is made here to study them briefly but in a proper perspective.

Conversion Movement

The decision of conversion taken by Ambedkar was not sporadic one, but it was a long thought-out one. It was a part of his struggle of emancipation. However, bitter and justifiably so, he was not inclined in cutting completely the roots of his community from Hindu fold. He gave sufficiently long time to the caste Hindu community to reform itself and eliminate obnoxious practice of untouchability and casteism. Ultimately, he chose Buddhism which might be considered as offshoot of Hinduism barring its pernicious practices of casteism and hierarchy; because it suited to his value system (human dignity, liberty, equality, compassion, etc.). It was, according to him, two aspects : one spiritual and the other social. He thought that by embracing Buddhism, the Harijans would acquire a new sense of self-dignity and separate identity.

The conversion was mostly confined to Mahars Though they achieved upper mobility, they failed to make a long-term desired impact on restructuring relationship between Caste Hindus and the Harijans. Even amongst those who embraced Buddhism the process of religious mobility was not accompanied by equal economic mobility. As a result, on the one hand the Harijans renounced old traditional occupations of livelihood and on the other they failed to secure the new ones commensurate with their newly developed sense of self-dignity, causing great internal tensions. But with all these drawbacks it was expected that it had psychological influence for the progress and that outward forms may after all mould the inner soul and lead to social happiness

The Mahars were probably the original inhabitants of Maharashtra, who were conquered and expropriated by the Aryan hordes who invaded and occupied the plains of India thousands of years ago The Mahars are inhabitants of plains and not of the hills Pollution was used as a means of ensuring complete separation "Where there is a village there is an abode of Mahars"—it means in every village there are Mahars They were given 'Watan' and duties such as protection of village boundaries, assistance in collecting the government revenues, helping in field surveys—were assigned to them Untouchability having arisen from conflict of colour or race, is racial and not functional in origin, and hence the abandonment of the function or occupation does not involve the removal of stigma attaching to birth itself.[1]

The mobility of Mahars was due to the following factors: (1) Ambedkar's leadership; (2) group solidarity, (3) identity and articulation of economic and political interests, (4) maximum utilisation of educational facilities offered; (5) de-sanskritization and (6) group conversion to Buddhism.

As regards conversion movement, Maharashtra was obviously the epicentre for the whole of the country and Nagpur the epicentre for the state of Maharashtra. In Nagpur and its vicinity—the Mahar concentration is the highest It is nearly 70%. The following figures will show the nature of conversion .

I.	Maharashtra	1951	2,487	Buddhist
		1961	27,89,501	,,
		1971	32,64,223	,,
II	India	1951	1,80,767	,,
		1961	32,50,227	,,

Out of the above total, 27,89,501 are in Maharashtra only; and out of them 80% constitute of Mahars[2].

Between 1961 and 1971 there has only been a moderate increase of about 5 6 lakhs leading to a total of 38,12,325. In Maharashtra state, the actual population (Buddhist) increased between 1961 and 1971 was 4,74,722. This is natural increase and does not show any increase in the conversion rate to Buddhism. Major contribution in the Buddhist population throughout India was from Maharashtra due to the conversion of Mahars to Buddhism under the leadership of Dr. Ambedkar. Mass conversion seems to have been abated. Buddhists numbering four million (38,12,315) form only 0.70% of the total population. Maharashtra accounts for over 8% of the total Buddhist population of the country,

[1]Bhatt, *Harijans of Maharashtra.*

[2]Kharat, *Asprushyanche Dharmantar*, p. 210.

though it forms only 6.47 per cent population of the State In Arunachal Pradesh, 13.3 per cent of the people are Buddhists

Articles 330, 332 and 334, of the Indian Constitution provide for reservation of seats for scheduled castes in both Parliament and State Assemblies upto 1980.

(1)	Lok Sabha	77 scheduled castes and 41 scheduled tribes
(2)	State Assemblies	477 out of 3,283
(3)	Maharashtra	6 out of 44 Parliament seats
(4)	,,	33 out of 264 State Assembly seats
(5)	Z P. 26 districts in Maharashtra	72 out of 1,271 seats

S Patwardhan comments: "The summary findings and recommendations of a Committee appointed by the Maharashtra Government in 1962; regarding the prevalence of untouchability, were that untouchability was found to be in retreat everywhere, faster in urban areas than in rural areas. The Committee further observed that conversion of Harijans to Buddhism instead of strengthening the movement against untouchability had actually weakened it It is separateness and defiance which bring about a conflict between the majority community and the Mahars. .. The Mahars live in villages and refuse to participate in the village life. They are isolated from the mainstream of the village. This has led to great resentments and feuds... The Maharashtra Government Report has stressed the adverse impact of the conversion movement on the eradication of untouchability " The author further remarks "One reason anti-untouchability measures have not made progress is its mix-up with the general problem of backward classes. There is a cold war between Harijans and caste Hindus But one thing must be noted that the Mahar Nav Budha no longer considers himself an untouchable. The sense of insecurity is found because of *watan* lands and ending of *Baluta* system They have made him footless."[8]

The Mahars wanted to reject caste as a status group and resorted to conversion, but the awareness of identity continues. Power is not related to caste status but caste has, however, provided a base for political mobilisation. The discontinuity of Mahars from the society can be traced to the following factors : (a) dissociation of relationship between caste and occupation; (b) amalgamation of subcastes; (c) an unwillingness to talk of the post; (d) wiping away of the old image; (e) rejection of Hinduism, its sanskaras, fasts on festivals; (f) increasing literacy; (g) a very high

[8]Patwardhan, *Change among India's Harijans, pp.* 174-175.

utilization of post-matric scholarships; (h) greater individual mobility and (i) conversion to Buddhism as an action of total rejection of caste society as well as the formation of R P.I.[4] It can be concluded that the Mahars have chosen the secular axis by pursuing educational attainments, higher education, and by articulation of interests through political participation Conversion to Buddhism was only an extension of the political mobilisation stated earlier.

Republican Party of India

At the time of the Cabinet Mission, Cripps remarked . "Dr. Ambedkar's organisation is somewhat more local in its character being mainly centred in Bombay and C.P.; the Congress-affiliated organisation is spread widely over the whole country.[5]

Ambedkar realised that the old methods and outlook were incommensurate with the growing democratic consciousness of the Indian masses. He enunciated new principles of cooperation with all, but his untimely death could not see the birth of the new Republican Party of India (RPI) as visualised by him.

The RPI was formed out of the A.I.S.C.F. which represented the depressed and backward classes in India. The name S.C.F. was changed to R.P.I. in 1957 to give it a national look. But it was dominated by Mahars. It exhibited caste features; and to these are added political interests and ambitions. An alliance with Congress led to strengthening of secular processes.

Though a party of Scheduled Castes, the RPI initially devoted much attention to the problems of landless labourers, among whom untouchables constituted a major proportion. This owed much to the leadership of the late Gaekwad, who, unlike the other leaders of the RPI, had a peasant base. Under Gaekwad's leadership struggles of landless labourers began in Dhulia Jalgaon and Nasik districts and in parts of the Nagpur region. As a part of these struggles, nearly 50,000 workers went to jail in 1959. Another massive satyagraha was lauhched by the RPI towards the end of 1964 to press the government to distribute fallow land and waste land near railway lines and canals among landless peasants. When Congress leaders saw the growing strength of the RPI, they worked out an alliance between the Congress and the RPI at the time of 1967 elections. This was the beginning of the decline of the RPI. The politics of the party got entangled in one split after another.

The RPI broke into factions soon after its formation. Dominant among the faction has been the so-called Gaekwad group which aligned itself

[4]*Ibid.,* 190.
[5]Appadorai and M. Groyar, p. 639.

with the Congress in Maharashtra The Khobragade group as well as the Gackwad group were benefited from their alliances with the Congress Khobragade became Deputy Speaker of the Lok Sabha while many Mahar leaders of the RPI became members of the Rajya Sabha and the Maharashtra Legislative Council with the support of the Congress. Others who left the RPI and joined the Congress were also benefited. By following a policy of simultaneous opposition to and collaboration with the Congress the RPI has also secured rich dividends for its members in terms of seats in Zila Parishads, and other elective bodies as well as important posts in government departments and corporations. While the RPI has been quite openly a party of the Mahars, none of the other opposition parties have attempted to organise the rest of the scheduled castes The result has been that the Mangs, the Chamars and the other sub-castes among the scheduled castes have remained supporters of the Congress for want of any alternative. A charter of demands was placed before the Prime Minister Huge public processions were started in July 1965 to protest against single-member constituencies. Then there were anti-starvation protests—joined by all opposition parties in southern Maharashtra. In these campaigns the R.P.I. by and large kept the loyalty of its caste-fellows.

Ambedkar was opposed to the idea of launching satyagrahas because he thought the touchables should not be antagonised. He emphasised constitutional means—moreover he called satyagraha as grammar of anarchy Gaekwad was also aware that Kala Ram Mandir Satyagraha was a failure, and this fact is communicated to Ambedkar in his letter (19-3-1930). After Ambedkar's death there was a clash between B. C. Kamble and Gaekwad which was evident from Kamble's book written to evaluate the Satyagraha campaign.

The following was a charter of demands presented by Republican leaders—Gaekwad, Khobragade and others—to Lal Bahadur Shastri, the Prime Minister of India : (1) Portrait of Dr. Ambedkar in the Central Hall of the Parliament; (2) land to the tiller; (3) idle and waste land to the landless labourers; (4) adequate distribution of foodgrains and control over rising prices; (5) improvement of slum-dwellers; (6) implementation of Minimum Wages Act of 1948; (7) extension of all privileges guaranteed by the Constitution to Scheduled Castes who embraced Buddhism; (8) harassment of the untouchables should cease; (9) full justice be done under the Untouchability (Offences) Act to them; (10) Reservation in services to Scheduled Castes and Scheduled Tribes be completed as soon as possible—not later than 1970.

Indira Gandhi called for bringing 'one of (Gandhi's) near dreams to

*Rajani Kothari, *Caste in Indian Politics*, p. 61.

reality' by giving education, employment and land ownership to Harijans and 'ensuring 'that people belonging to Scheduled Castes and Scheduled Tribes are put in positions of authority where they can solve their own and others' problems'

In 1969, the RPI split into two B D Khobragade and his followers moved away from the parent party. In April 1974, the two groups talked out their differences and formed a fifteen-member presidium. In October 1974 a party convention at Nagpur dissolved the presidium and unanimously elected B. D. Khobragade as President. Then again there were two groups · Khobragade and Gavai In the seventh session of the A I R P I in November 1975, Gavai was elected as president of the party

Shortly after the death of Ambedkar the rift in the RPI leadership came to the surface. The towering personality of Dr. Ambedkar was alone capable to keep his lieutenants unite Once this personality was removed from the scene the political rivalry and competition for leadership resulted in fragmenting the RPI. The rift was caused not so much on the ideological grounds but aspirations for leadership and party control. Historically speaking this rift has caused irreparable loss not only to the RPI, but to the entire cause of the oppressed community.

It is a historical law that in an uneven conflict between those who possess all the sinews of power on the one hand, and those who have nothing else but their determination and will to fight oppression the latter has even chance to win only if they have complete solidarity and unity amongst their ranks and their leaders fired with the crusading spirit of fighting oppression and injustice and not with lust of power. It is because post-Ambedkar RPI leaders failed to grasp the above law and unfortunately indulged themselves into mutually recriminating game of power and self-seeking, that resulted in the break-up of unity of RPI. It must be noted here that the rank and file of the Party remained steadfast to the ideals of the Party and Ambedkar. The ruling party took advantage of this state of affairs and attracted a sizeable section in its fold by political manoeuvring. The attempts to reconcile the divided party were made. The pressures of the followers exerted too much on it. The younger generation being increasingly alienated took to more strong agitational politics and formed 'Dalit Panthers'—a radical party in Maharashtra which soon captured the imagination of the youths.

The *Dalit Panthers* (DP) is a new organisation; in facts it is not yet a well-knit organisation, but a movement.

Ambedkar's travel from the ILP to the RPI was a significant one. His faith in parliamentary democracy, and the negation of the extra-parliamentary activities, and the petitioning the ruling Congress Party for paltry concessions to the Scheduled Castes—resulted in total frustra-

tion of the youth Incidents of atrocities against the Scheduled Castes were coming to light and public attention was getting increasingly focussed on them In a statement in the Lok Sabha on August 19, 1970, the Minister for Home—N R M rdha gave statistics of the number of murders of Harijans during the period 1967 and 1969—totalling 1,117 The Elayaperumal Committee report, submitted in 1969, testified to the widespread ill-treatment of the Scheduled Castes Special discrimination was at its height The Committee also found that bonded or forced labour existed in acute forms in many parts of the country and that its victims were mostly the untouchables Low percentage of literacy and negligible increase in the central government services of the Scheduled Castes brought out by the Commissioner of Scheduled Castes and Scheduled Tribes resulted in total frustration In the middle of 1972 two widely publicised outrage against Scheduled Castes occurred in Maharashtra at Brahmangaon and Bavda. At Brahmangaon two Scheduled Caste women were assaulted by high-caste Hindus. At Bavda the Hindus organised a boycott of the Harijans

The politically conscious young men among the Scheduled Castes were stunned by the apathy of so-called progressive opinion The young elements began to think, when peaceful movement to tackle these problems were mercilessly suppressed by brute force, the Scheduled Castes were bound to lose faith in national symbols Ambedkar's movement was characterised as a socialist movement, but Hindus did not support Ambedkar.

Dalit Panthers became the movement of the 'Dalits' who had been abandoned by the RPI and its leaders. The term 'Dalit' was defined to include all those who were exploited and oppressed irrespective of religion or cases. They would fight religious obscurantism and struggle to solve the problems of the have-nots. They would destroy orthodox Hindu tradition, take up burning issues like those of food, shelter and clothing They were not to be content with concessions handed out to the 'Dalits'. Conversion to Buddhism, they thought, freed the Scheduled Castes from mental and psychological enslavement adopting rational attitude. Unity of the Scheduled Castes with other 'Dalits' was urged Communalism, casteism, the landlords, the capitalists who made slaves of people, the ruling government and reactionary parties and organisations like the Jan Sangh, the Shiv Sena, the Buddha Sabha and the Hindu Mahasabha—were regarded as enemies of the movement. They thought that only revolution would solve the problems of the 'Dalits'.

The *Dalit Panthers* movement started with Marathi literary magazines propagating anti-establishment and left trends in Marathi literature. It sprung up in the areas such as Nasik, Bombay and Poona which used to

be the strongholds of the RPI The activities have been restricted to demonstration against RPI leaders, the S.C. leaders The progress of American Negroes from the peaceful path of the 1950s to the Black Panther movement has, it appears, its parallel among the Scheduled Castes in India. In parts of the country where the communists are relatively strong, like West Bengal, Kerala and Andhra Pradesh, the struggle of the Scheduled Castes has to an extent become part of the larger class struggle At present, there is lumpen proletariat element among its present supporters

The Scheduled Caste population of Maharashtra is around 35 lakhs according to 1971 census This population is composed of 57 subcastes, prominent among them are Mahars (35 per cent) The *Dalit Panthers*, at present, is quite simply an organisation of the Mahars. Though Ambedkar achieved all-India status as a leader of the Scheduled Castes it was obvious that in Maharashtra, his influence was restricted to Mahars His call to embrace Buddhism was heeded only by the Mahars. As a result the terms 'Mahars' and 'Buddhists' have become synonymous in the state. The Mahar-Mang and Mahar-Chamar antagonisms have got more bitter as the Mahars, by virtue of their political organisation, have appropriated the lion's share of the concessions and privileges extended by the Government to the Scheduled Castes According to the 18th report of the Commissioner for Scheduled Castes and Scheduled Tribes for 1968-69 out of the total scholarship funds available for the Scheduled Castes in Maharashtra, Mahars appropriated 84 per cent in 1966-67 and 83 per cent in 1967-68 As a result, the Mahars have outdistanced the rest of the Scheduled Castes in terms of the other indicators of economic betterment such as the level and quality of employment, the degree of urbanisation, etc

The *Dalit Panthers* made their appearance in cities like Bombay and Poona where there are large concentrations of Mahars. They have created an impression that the *Dalit Panthers* are a political force committed to the overthrow of the present social and political system. The broad political objective to which they are committed by their own manifesto cannot be achieved so long as they remain a party of the Scheduled Castes.

Faced with the emergence of the D P the different factions of the RPI are trying seriously to come together. In their public meetings prominent RPI leaders like Shantabai Dani and R. S. Gavai call upon their followers to 'crush the D.P. wherever they are'. Congress M.L.As. from Scheduled Castes other than Mahars regard it is a headache for the R.P.I. leaders.

The main points from the Manifesto of the D P. are as follows : "We

shall have to dominate the controlling positions in the economic, political and cultural sphere. . We do not want a place among Brahmins. We seek to rule the entire country. Mere change of heart or liberal education will not end injustice or exploitation We shall rouse the revolutionary masses and organise them; the flame of revolution will emerge through the struggle of these vast masses. The social system cannot be revolutionised by mere demand for concessions, election and *satyagraha*. Our rebellious ideas of social revolution will germinate the soil, grow in the minds of the people and ultimately will flash into existence like hot burning soil."

The Manifesto says further ". Ambedkar towards the close of his career realised the limitations and futility of the casteist framework of the politics. That led him to dissolve SCF and form RPI. . The *Dalit Panthers* is a revolt against the sell-out of the Republican leadership Scheduled Castes and Tribes, landless labourers, poor peasants are our allies. .All those who are victims of political and economic suppression are our allies. Landlords, capitalists and their agents are our enemies." The Manifesto does not prescribe Buddhism as a panacea for the ills of the oppressed. The movement acknowledges that the problem of the Scheduled Caste masses cannot be solved within the casteist and hierarchical framework of the present social structure.

There are two dominant pulls in the organisation One is trying to provide it a wider base by enlarging the connotation of 'oppressed' (Dalit). It has a Marxist orientation The other group is afraid that if the organisation follows the former course, it will lose its separate identity and will meet the same fate as the other radical movements in India. It has denounced current parliamentary institutions and practices. It regards the RPI as mouthing slogans of ruling elite The Manifesto said further . "The Hindu feudal rule can be a hundred times more ruthless today than it was in the Muslim period or in the British period in oppressing the *Dalits*. Because this Hindu feudal rule has in its hands all the arteries of production, bureaucracy, judiciary, army and police forces."

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